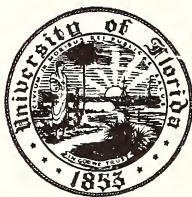


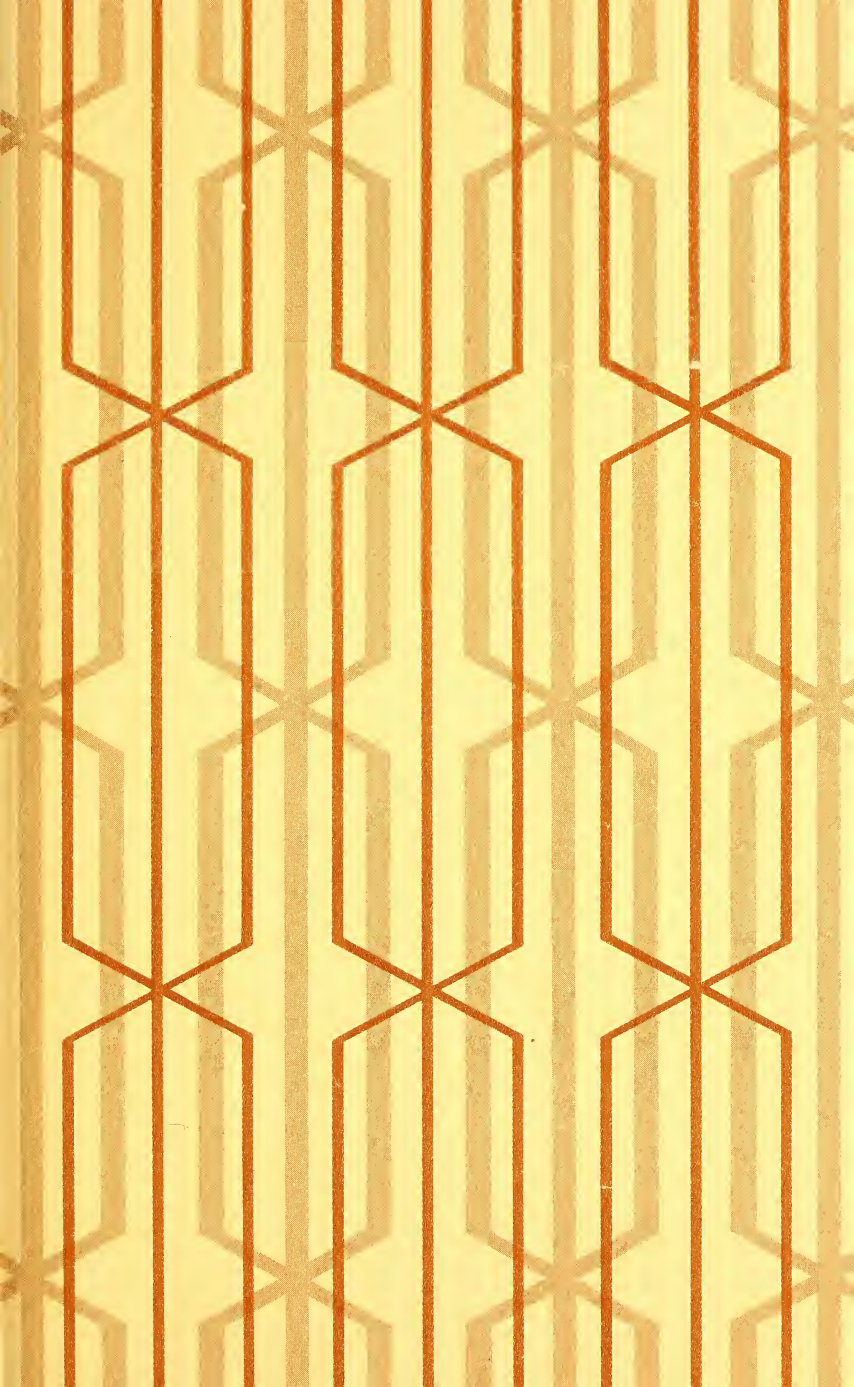





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THE ISLAND OF YOUTH  
AND OTHER STORIES





# THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

AND OTHER STORIES

BY  
DONN BYRNE

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE ISLAND OF YOUTH . . .	I
II. THE GREAT GIFT . . .	68
III. THE GRYPHON . . .	88
IV. THE LION IN THE STREETS . . .	141
V. SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I". . .	163
VI. THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG . . .	188
VII. THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN . . .	213
VIII. THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA . . .	239
IX. A MANNER OF LEGACY . . .	262





# I

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

### PROLOGUE—BIMINI

EVERY evening now at sunset he would sit and read in the quaint, beautifully lettered book. He could not rise or make any movement, hardly, beyond that of turning the heavy vellum pages, for all his right side, where the Carib warrior had speared him, had become, as it were, lifeless. From the high tower in the stern of the caravel he could see the blue Caribbean slip by in an easy, undulating swell, flecked here and there by white patches of foam, as white flowers might spangle a meadow. Flying fish were busy as crickets, and gulls circled above those bellying white sails with plaintive, lonely cries.

“And north of Hispaniola,” he read, “there lieth the isle of Bimini, a bower of flowers and singing birds, an arbour of green trees and silver sands. Gold floweth in the rivers in minute sparkling grains, and is found like great pebbles in the holes of rocks. The winds shake ripe fruit from the overladen trees, and a vast perfume comes from the blossoming plants.”

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

He turned over the pages slowly until he came to the passage that had been in his mind night and day for twenty years.

"And there is a fountain on Bimini, the virtue of which is this: that it maketh old men young."

Suddenly he looked up and stroked his tow-like fighter's beard. His eye wandered from the tower platform to the bows of the ship, where the navigator paced surrounded by a group of jerkined and bearded soldiery. A breeze had sprung up, and the pennant of yellow and red was crackling to the wind like a whip. Beneath the tower a calm friar paced to and fro, murmuring his office sonorously. The sun hung to the westward in a scarlet disk, poised on the edge of the sea like a plate poised by a juggler.

"And men may scoff, saying: Behold! this is an idle tale," he read on; "but I say: He Who put the fixed and the moving stars in their places, Who performed the miracle of the growing grass, Who maketh the moon to set and the sun to rise, might not He also have done this, the least work of His hand?"

He turned to look at the sunset again, and suddenly he knew that this evening, for the last time he would see the red disk fall with his bodily eyes. He had raised his last harbour, and Bimini was still undiscovered. For him at least the Fountain of Youth would never purl.



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

His life ran through his head in flickering, instantaneous images—the glamour of the court of Ferdinand and Isabella, the gracious dames of honour, the gallant captains; the assault on Granada, with the swarthy, hook-nosed Moors retiring suddenly before the rush of Castilian lances; the courtship of Inez, Doña Inez, the white flower of Spain!

His mind dwelt on this courtship for a long time, and his hard old fighter's heart seemed to open and a fresh wind to blow through it at the memory. Ancient, forgotten occasions came to him with a great tenderness—the occasion of holding her hands; the occasion of kissing her finger tips; the evening he knew she loved him—an ineffable, unbelievable evening, with the silver sickle of the moon showing in a May sky, and the faint harmonious clamour of pigeons in the eaves of the Spanish garden.

He had gone next morning with Columbus, the great admiral, to conquer a new world. How gallantly he had set out, how strong he had been, youth hammering through his veins and nerves in a singing, pulsating fluid!

A flashing light came suddenly into his eyes, and he leaned back trembling. The sun was now a scarlet segment on the horizon, like some grotesque red beetle on a wall. The great quiet of sunset had come over everything. No longer the sea-gulls called querulously; and the sound of the waves

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

slapping against the sides of the caravel had even ceased. Southward Cuba showed—a faint, blue mist.

He leaned forward on his table and slowly picked up a quill. Then very laboriously he began writing in the margin of the book.

“And every man’s heart is Bimini,” he wrote, “and the Fountain of Youth is in it, and the hand of a woman shall unseal it and make the spring to flow.”

He laid the pen down again, and leaned heavily upon the table. There was a catch in his throat, and the numbness in his side seemed to extend all over him. He felt life ebbing from him like the turn of a tide. There was a mist before his eyes. “God be good to an old soldier,” he muttered, and let his head sink to the table.

. . . . .

The friar had no eyes for Cuba, rising now southward like a dun bird. His face was turned toward the east, where Madrid is.

A little flash of light on the water attracted him. It might have been the glint of the setting sun on a flying fish, or on the wing of a sea-gull, or on a curling wave.

“Ponce de Leon is dead,” he said suddenly. He called to the bearded soldiers in the bow: “Listen, my little children, your great Captain is dead.”

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

### I—THE CAPTAIN-AT-ARMS

She felt, as she leaned over the rail with the white-ducked purser, that the eyes of the brown man in the steamer chair were levelled at her shoulder-blades. It seemed to her that two warm and very much alive points were playing about the back of her neck, and as she turned around quickly to look at some imaginary object forward, she saw him pivot his glance lazily to the horizon and yawn politely behind his hand.

"So that is John Lynn," she said.

"That is John Lynn," replied the purser suavely, with the wise and amused smile of an animal tamer who is exhibiting a Siberian wolf to a gaping child.

"And what is he going to do in Porto Rico?"

"My dear Miss Durrow"—the brown-faced purser grinned again—"if I knew that, I could save myself, the captain, the steamship company and the officials of five governments much perturbation and worry of mind."

"So that was John Lynn," she said to herself. She had known the brown man was "somebody" from the moment she had walked up the gang-plank of the mail steamer.

They had left New York on Saturday—a white dream of snowy peaks and ice-spangled citadels, with its serrated line of skyscrapers showing up clear and dazzling like Arctic mountains; they had

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

passed the sullen, mutinous river of the Gulf Stream, with its black frowning clouds and savage buffets of rain and storm; and now, on the third morning, they had slipped into an expanse of sea, blue as lapis lazuli. Waves, flashing and sparkling in the sun, rolled away on each side of them as if cut by a giant knife. Behind them, over the cream of their wake, gulls hovered like cherry blossoms, and southward porpoises played clumsily.

She felt a sort of shock at seeing John Lynn; for, while she knew of every exploit of the great soldier of fortune, it had never occurred to her to regard him as a human being, walking, sleeping, breathing. His name had been to her like the name of Marco Polo—a term embodying romance and adventure; and his exploits had been merely manifestations of these qualities. And then suddenly to meet him, a quiet man in a coarse, grey tweed suit, a man of thirty-two or thirty-three, with tired brown eyes and a limp!

Her father, who had detested war and loved chivalry, had often spoken in her hearing of John Lynn, whom he held up as the highest type of fighting man the world had ever seen. He had told her, had her father, how Lynn, appearing out of nowhere as it would seem, had fought as a volunteer against Aguinaldo in the Philippines; he told how, by Lynn's efforts, China had been saved from a

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

second Boxer uprising; of his stand with the Italians in Tripoli and with the Albanians at Tchataldja. The Montenegrins used to say that it was better to die with John Lynn than to win with Derek Pasha, because Lynn would of a certainty lead them into Paradise.

Constance Durrow, leaning over the taffrail of the liner and watching the log spin like a trawler's line, remembered two things which Lynn had done:

The first was when, in the great Balkan struggle, the Turkish soldiery had been driven out of Podgoritza. Old King Peter, proud and grateful, had sent for John Lynn. An orderly brought word that Lynn was too busy.

"That is queer," said the old king, and set out to find him.

He discovered him in a side street, taking down a letter from a Turkish private whose minutes were numbered.

Lynn turned to the fighting king. "You'll have to excuse me for a moment," he said. "I'm doing something for an old fellow-craftsman of ours, and I can't get away."

The grim monarch never forgot the incident. Ever after he alluded to him as "John Lynn, whom I love as my son."

And the second incident took place in Mexico, when Lynn drew his sword for Madero against the



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

force of the old Indian general. After a seven-hour pitched battle a comrade found him feeding crumbs to a week-old mongrel pup. "Where did you find him?" the comrade asked.

"I picked him up early this morning, when we were riding into the town," Lynn answered. "He was lost, so I stuffed him into a saddle-bag."

"And you've had him here all day, in this inferno?"

"Why not?" Lynn looked up with surprise. "You didn't expect me to leave him there, did you?"

These things—rather than the triumphant procession into Adrianople, rather than the charge of his free-lance irregulars in Tripolitana, rather than the Boxers' stealing hurriedly out of Macao—fed the fancy of Constance Durrow when she thought of Lynn.

And now, leaning over the taffrail, she reviewed the face and figure of John Lynn and decided that he could not look otherwise than he did: a lean lath of a man, supple and tough as a willow rod; face small, irregular and brown, with a nose hooked like a beak, and hair thinning at the temples; the scar of a sabre cut on the left temple showing white and clean as a tooth against the brown tan of his skin; a short-cropped, brown moustache outlining a mouth that smiled like a child's; a voice so soft and gentle that it seemed like a flute. Another jagged scar showed on the back of his right hand, and he

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

limped slightly where a Turk's bullet had ground through his knee.

She was not of the age to feel any blind admiration for a soldier; her twenty-eighth birthday was past and her twenty-ninth loomed up just six months ahead. But one thing made her heart warm when she thought of him—that he had never, as other mercenaries had, fought on the side of an unworthy cause. It was his profession; it wasn't his trade. Other men might do it for money, other men might do it for fame; but he fought only to right wrongs and to practise chivalry, as any of the knights of Arthur's Round Table might have done.

"Now, if ever a man like that——" she mused, and she began blushing. And little by little the blush passed and left a smile about the corners of her mouth and in the bronze pupils of her eyes.

The purser straightened a moonlight photograph on the wall of his cabin, took a deep critic at his features in a glass, settled himself in his swivel chair, and turned to his assistant, a fish-eyed youth with a pattern of sleep-veins on his face like the markings on an admirer's, it

"Now, Sweeny, young fellow, my business admiration  
"I want to ask you something. Would the death of me a handsome man?"

"I would," the assistant replied could alone, and

"Very well," the purser nodded trusted lieutenants

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

whom her father had chosen for her, the great lumber business he had built up, with its humming factories and immense fleet of white-sailed ships.

Her father had sent her, under the care of a chaperon, on a tour of the world a year before his death; her mother, as beautiful, it is said, as ever her daughter was, had died a week after Constance was born. Three days after Constance's sailing her father had visited a physician.

"You have, I have heard," said the physician, "bought a large orange and pineapple and coffee plantation somewhere in the West Indies."

"In Porto Rico," said Peter Durrow. "I've bought it, but I've never seen it."

"It would be an ideal place to spend your last year in," the doctor said gravely. "I'd leave next Saturday. I'm sorry. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Durrow, "and thank you for being frank."

She came home when she heard of his death—he had said nothing of his warning; he didn't believe in clouding one year of her life with the impending demise. Very bravely she took up the work where he had left it, and began to run it with the same ideals which she had inherited from the old lumberman. Her friends remonstrated. That was man's work, they said. Why was she doing it?

"I am doing it," she answered, "because my father has done everything he possibly could for me,

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

and naturally I should like to make him proud of me."

But wasn't she ever going to marry? they asked.

"Of course I am," she said. "When as big a man as my father comes along I'm not going to waste a minute—if he'll have me."

And she had prospered amazingly. Women had befriended her. Men had faced her with the frank look in their eyes with which they gaze upon a clean, straight man. Her workmen and foremen had rallied about her as the tall lances of France had gathered to the white banner of the Maiden of Orleans. She had gained great strength from the work, great independence, and had lost not one whit of her womanliness in the trial. When she took a holiday she enjoyed it, as she was enjoying this, her first trip to her plantation near San Juan, because she felt she had earned it.

The purser was worried by no delinquencies on his part. He awoke from his pleasant reverie to obtain more corroboration from the assistant.

"Here's the case in point, Sweeny, young fellow, my lad," he began. "I like this Miss Durrow, and, as you say, there is no reason why she shouldn't like me, and you go farther and you say there is no reason why she shouldn't marry me. You have admitted that I am handsome, educated, have natural refinement. I have shown her about the ship, talked to her, made myself pleasant. Now listen, Sweeny,

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

young fellow, my lad: would you say, as far as your meagre experience of life goes, that I have made an impression?"

"I would," nodded Sweeny.

"Very well again. Now listen, young fellow, my lad, and let it be a lesson to you on the inconstancy of women. I lay myself out to be pleasant to that girl. I give her to understand that my regard for her may some day become something stronger than that—and then this nickel-plated brigand of the Balkans comes along and she drops me. I want you to understand, Sweeny, young fellow, that this man Lynn is not in my class. He is nothing but a bluff, Sweeny, take it from me. He is not there with the natural refinement or—what can I do for you, Mr. Lynn?"

For the brown face and pleasant smile of the soldier of fortune had appeared in the doorway. He nodded amiably, bowed, and stroked his short moustache with boyish embarrassment.

"I just wanted to know this, Mr. Hulst," he said in his low, caressing voice: "Would any steward want for any purpose to come into my stateroom at two in the morning; and if so, couldn't he wake me up instead of trying to pick the lock of my door?"

"No one would want to go into your room at that hour," the purser answered with a puzzled



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

frown; "and certainly no one would try to pick a lock."

"I must have dreamed it," Lynn laughed good-naturedly. "I thought somebody was trying to enter last night, so I jumped up and switched on the light. I opened the door and thought I saw someone run down the deck in the darkness. I must have dreamed it though."

"Oh, yes, you must have," the purser laughed back. "The difference of atmosphere between ocean and land," he said, as if quoting a pamphlet, "is liable to be disturbing at first to the landsman. A mentality is engendered——"

"Quite so," Lynn interrupted dryly. "I found that somebody dropped this outside my door hastily about that time."

He fished out of his pocket a steel sphere, about three inches in diameter, covered with leather like a baseball. Through a perforation near the surface a heavy leather thong ran, so that the ball could be hung from the wrist. Lynn threw it on the desk.

"Would you kindly announce on your bulletin board," he said, "that a particularly evil form of blackjack has been found? And when you discover the loser, please introduce me to him. I should like to see the man who operates that."

"We've got some tough sailors on board," the purser admitted. "It's hard to get anyone to go to sea now. It probably belongs to one of them."

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"Perhaps," John Lynn commented dryly. "There's one thing more I want to ask you. Is there any passenger on board not on the list?"

"There's just one party," the purser answered—"a Chinese gentleman and his valet. He's going down to study the grape-fruit situation. He's an expert on citrus growths. He hasn't stirred from his stateroom since he came on board."

"A Chinese gentleman"—Lynn thought for a moment—"and his valet. H'm! Would you mind telling me his name?"

"His name is Dr. Wu Li-Lang," the purser answered. "He comes from some Portuguese place in China——"

"Macao," Lynn broke in quickly. "The name is unknown to me," he mused. "I never heard of a Chinese gentleman being interested in grape-fruit. Macao!" He grinned. "I wish I'd kept that black-jack. Well, thank you. Good afternoon."

They stood together at the bow of the liner, John Lynn and she. Flying fish slipped over the tops of the waves like stones skimming on a pond. From overhead the sun's rays dropped in a molten shower. To lee a four-masted schooner beat southward to St. Thomas, bulging with white sails. A massed white effect of cumulus clouds rose gracefully weatherward like the feathery discharge of ordnance. The bows of the steamer dipped gently

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

and rose again, like a well-nigh perfectly balanced board.

"And you are a descendant of Ponce de Leon!" Constance Durrow gasped. "I think that is one of the most wonderful things I have ever heard."

"I am afraid the family has treated the old warrior rather scurvily," Lynn laughed. "We have changed the 'de Leon' to Lynn and the 'Juan' to John. But we have enough of the old man's spirit left to roam up and down the world looking for adventure."

She gazed away eastward where the clouds were hanging. She felt suddenly that she wanted to go by this man's side through the earth on his quests and journeys, and she experienced a feeling of shame that she should feel so without any wish expressed on his part that she should come.

How she and he had drifted into talking to each other so much she hardly knew. An apology on bumping into each other in coming out of the dining-room; a few comments on the weather and on the ship's daily run; a smile exchanged over the execrable and pretentious singing of a Neapolitan ballad by an elderly passenger—and they were leaning over the rail together watching the saffron seaweed float lazily past the liner's knife-like bows.

"And you are going down to Porto Rico to see old Ponce de Leon's town?" she smiled.

"No"—he laughed heartily—"more sentimental

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

than that, much more sentimental. I am going to find Bimini and the Fountain of Youth."

"Bimini!" She turned about and looked at him with a doubt in her eyes. "And the Fountain of Youth! You don't believe in them, surely?"

"I don't know," Lynn answered, "if I believe it or not; but I want to. I have seen as marvellous things as that. I have seen magic practised in the Sennyuseh lodges in Africa, the greater and the lesser magic; I have seen Chinese doctors bring the dead to life, and seen witchcraft done in the Balkans. And even the Fountain of Youth, which makes old men young—that hardly seems a lie after those things."

"Do you think you can find it?" she asked banteringly.

"I hope to heaven I can!" he answered.

She was shocked to hear the bitter harshness in his tones. She turned to look at him, and suddenly she noticed how tired his eyes were in spite of their perpetual smile, and the drawn corners of his mouth and the listless shoulders. Something impelled her to ask spontaneously why these things were; why he, young and free and famous, should need rejuvenation in his prime.

"But you," she stammered, "tell me—you are a young man—what do you want with the Fountain of Youth?"

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

He rose from bending over the rail and caught it with both hands. His eyes half closed and he tensed himself. "I need it," he said simply. "I'm very tired. The world is as bad as when I started fighting. There have been few wrongs righted. I have been working all along, like old Quixote jousting at the windmills, and I'm tired of it."

She felt she wanted to put her hand out and catch his. All his words, she knew, were tumbling out of his heart, as a seething pot overflows. And she felt somehow that she was the first woman or man to hear him speak thus.

"And my occupation's gone," he said; "they don't want soldiers any more. Over in Europe they are not fighting with swords and rifles and lances. They are fighting with money and gas and food. Never a horse, never a banner; never the sound of a fife or the throb of a drum. Greasy mechanics oil guns and press buttons; mathematicians calculate on paper where a ton of shrapnel is going to land. Good men are dying in ditches without a chance for their lives—poisoned, starved, mangled. That's not war; that's a butcher's slaughter house." A queer involuntary spasm passed over his face. She knew he was thinking of old comrades who were dead. "I'm afraid I need Bimini badly." He laughed as a sort of apology.

"And I hope to heaven you find it," she said sincerely, with a film of moisture in her eyes; and



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

she moved from his side quickly to leave him by himself, as one leaves alone a man whose heart is aching.

The clouds which had been threatening on the horizon swung into a drifting wind. The sea rose in long, easy pulsations and rolled the liner from side to side like a child's cradle. The faint white outlines of a barquentine to starboard oscillated like a swinging pendulum.

Constance Durrow sprang down the companion-way from bows to promenade deck easily, lightly, like a gull finishing his swoop. Beside her, with the quick, loping stride of his race, came Pedro de Azala, the young Porto Rican poet-patriot, whom his followers called the "Thrush of Boriquen." They swung over and caught the rail.

"It's really too bad," De Azala muttered peevishly. "I wanted your first glance of Porto Rico to be the most dazzling thing your eyes ever rested on. It is the most beautiful place on earth——"

She wasn't listening to him very intently. Across from her on the weather side of the deck John Lynn was talking to the first officer, a lank, cadaverous man with a bald head and a black walrus moustache. The wind brought her the mate's conversation.

"I tell you, Mr. Lynn," he complained, "sailing isn't what it used to be. They won't need sailors

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

on a steam vessel—just mechanics. Where do you need the art and science of navigation in running this tin tub?"

The Porto Rican still continued his eulogy of his native country. "We call it 'Boriquen, the lovely land, the daughter of the sea and the sun,' Miss Durrow," he said in his throaty voice. "Listen," and he began singing in a rhythmic, vibrating minor:

*Esta es la linda tierra que busco yo,  
Es Boriquen la hija, la hija del mar y el sol!*

"And it's there that John Lynn is going to find his Fountain of Youth," she said, not knowing that she was speaking aloud.

The Porto Rican swung around and looked at her quizzically. Laughter bubbled in his brown eyes. "And he told you that?" He laughed.

She looked at De Azala with anger in her face. "What is he going for then?" she asked blindly.

"Wherever John Lynn goes, there's trouble," the Porto Rican replied; "there's a war or a revolution. He's going to some of the West Indies—British, Danish, French or American—to start a revolt probably—or to look for treasure. But Bimini? No!"

She turned around and looked over toward Lynn.

The mate was continuing his jeremiad against modern vessels. "And the sailors in our days were

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

different," he complained. He leaned over the rail and pushed out a contemptuous finger at an able-bodied seaman who was swabbing the deck with a broom. "Look at that charwoman," he sneered.

Lynn laughed and leaned far over the side.

A passenger came around the deck at a run as the ship tilted with a lurch; he stopped and steadied himself. Constance Durrow watched him for a moment and recognized him as a man who had sat by himself all the voyage, a red-headed six-footer with the build of a giant. He moved unsteadily across the stern. The port side of the vessel rose to the swell; the passenger shot forward like a catapult.

"Oh!" she said suddenly, and clung back to the rail in fright.

The red-headed passenger had struck Lynn heavily in his plunge forward, with a clumsy adroitness that seemed somehow premeditated.

She saw Lynn pitch forward for a minute, slip his feet into the bars of the rail, recover his balance and slip aside. He sprang to the deck like a flash, his lameness gone. His shoulders balanced for a moment, and then his right hand licked out like the paw of a cat. It caught the red-headed man's jaw with a sound like a mallet striking wood. The red-headed man span like a teetotum and dropped in a crumpled heap.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

The mate looked at Lynn with some sternness on his face. "Man, you've got a fierce temper," he said reprovingly.

Constance Durrow looked aghast. The Porto Rican smiled. Slowly and dazedly the passenger picked himself up.

Lynn moved toward him. As he moved, he suggested the easy movement of a panther. One could imagine the brown, satin-like muscles slipping around his shoulders and chest.

"I am sorry, dear sir," he apologized, but his voice beneath its soft purr sounded as hard as steel. "I am sorry I lost my temper. But I always lose my temper when I am bumped like that." He opened his coat and showed the blue haft of an automatic nestling between chest and arm. "I am always ready for any little matter like this, do you see? You understand? Thanks so much—and sorry!"

He turned and swung down the deck with practised sea legs.

The Porto Rican bellowed with laughter. He stopped suddenly and whistled. His eyes closed shrewdly.

"They want to kill Lynn pretty hard, if they try it in broad daylight. Nice work too. Subtle accident. Cast him overboard in a sea like this. Not a chance," he mused.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

He turned, and laughed at the girl's scared face.

"But they'll have to work twenty-four hours a day to catch John Lynn napping."

### II—THE MANDARIN FROM MACAO

In the forbidden City of Peking they speak his name only in whispers, now that the Manchu days are gone. On an American liner he might be merely a learned Chinese scientist; but in the Yellow Empire, from Macao to Mukden, he is the secret wish of all the yellow people, the Manchu who may one day sit on the throne and drive the foreigners into the sea.

Until then he is condemned to cover his vast Manchu bulk—he is seven feet tall and straight as a sapling in spite of his sixty-two years—in a sack suit made by an American tailor, instead of in blouse of red silk and trousers of purple, bound with his girdle of yellow which denotes his royal pedigree, in high boots of satin with fan thrust into the side.

Whatever he might be in China, in Porto Rico he was nothing at all. As he walked through the narrow, cool streets, like groves, few turned to look at him. To the quiet, surprise-surfeited brown men he was merely a new American novelty; to the Americans, also surfeited, he was another of

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

those weird human beings who never fail to turn up on the plaza of San Juan—a Chinaman, abnormally tall, who did nothing more exciting than wear American-made sack clothes and a sun helmet and thump along on the pavements with a heavy mahogany cane.

Days passed for Constance Durrow in a rapid cinematograph-like picture of bright golden sun and blue mountains and green sea. She made long excursions over the plantation that her father had bequeathed to her, and three times in three days she drove into San Juan, making various excuses for herself, but in reality hoping for the chance of meeting John Lynn. She had seen him once on the street, but had only bowed to him.

To-day she was intent on meeting him, with an eagerness she was quite ashamed of, if she had to search through every street in the town. She met him in a dim corner of the Calle de la Sol, near the old church where Ponce de Leon is buried, talking in fluent Spanish to a tubby brat who was driving an obstinate goat along the street.

A tactless old mendicant, taking them for affianced or married, poured forth a stream of felicitations that made Lynn blush to his ears. He asked her how she liked San Juan.

She said she was delighted. "And Bimini?" she asked suddenly.



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"I don't know how it is," he said, his face brightening; "but since I've come down here the legend has become more and more of a reality to me. I believe in it firmly now. Inside of five days I shall have a boat and be off after it."

"You are really going," she said, her eyes shining. "You believe in it."

"I said I believed in it." He laughed. She noticed how much he seemed to have brightened since she saw him on the boat. "If it is anywhere, I think I know where to look for it. There is no use looking in the Bahamas; every spot of the Bahamas is known. If it is anywhere it's among some of the Virgins and Leewards—on Saba, the Dutch Island, or on the Danish St. John, or on Tortola or Gorda, the British ones, or on St. Martin or Sombrero—all those are just masses of flowers and fruit and spans of jungle that have never been entered. I'm going to have a fifty-foot yacht and cruise and explore."

"Oh, I wish——" she said suddenly and stopped. She wished she might go with him, and had nearly said it aloud. She bit her lip. "I wish you'd let me know, as soon as you can, what success you've had."

"You'll be the first I'll tell," he said, and blushed. They swung along the narrow streets, strangely silent—past queer cobblers' shops; past taverns with groups of excited talkers disputing in the cool interior; past the inviting green courts of Spanish houses, with bronze, half-caste women slipping,

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

barefooted and mysterious, to and fro. They swung into the white, hot Plaza de Delicias, and a frown flashed over Lynn's face.

A gigantic figure came along, majestically thumping his way with a mahogany cane. A faint haze in his eyes and an uplifting of his mouth showed disdain for the occidental world about him. He caught sight of Lynn and Constance Durrow, and with a grace that a French Royalist would have envied raised his sun helmet, bowed and passed on.

Lynn's soft felt hat came off mechanically, but there was no look of pleasant recognition on his face.

Constance Durrow turned to him in surprise. "Who is that wonderful-looking man?" she asked.

"That," said Lynn—and his teeth were set and his eyebrows were furrowed; he spoke jerkily—"is the most dangerous man in Asia." She waited an instant. He went on: "That is the man whom the Boxers call the 'Banished Angel.' His name is Lieng-hsin, from Macao, a mandarin of the Ruby. If the secret lodges of China have their way, he'll one day be emperor."

She looked after the towering bulk of the Manchu with distended eyes. If she had not seen the look of concern on Lynn's face, she could have thought the soldier of fortune was jesting with her, even though he had done nothing like it before. "What on earth does he want down here?" she asked.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"I've got an idea," Lynn answered slowly, "that what he wants is me. And if I'm right," he went on with a firm seriousness, "then heaven help me!"

And with an unexpected brusqueness—a brusqueness that was rude—he raised his hat, shook hands, wished her good afternoon, and disappeared in the direction of the docks.

And so the presence of Lieng-hsin grew on John Lynn's horizon from a cloud the size of a man's hand to a banked thunderstorm. It took the savour from the adventure he was embarked on; it followed him on board the yacht he was preparing, and haunted him while supervising the spread of the fine new silk sails and the careful caulking of seams and the painting of prow and stern. It took the gold out of the sunlight and filled the corners of the antique streets with waiting shades.

If it had been any ordinary danger he would have attacked and met it halfway; but he knew well the steel webs the Celestial weaves with ghastly patience. It was only by shaking himself up that he resumed the walks he loved among the grey old churches, resplendent in blue and gold, through the narrow streets which conserved, like an aromatic balm, the atmosphere of the days when Ponce de Leon and his men passed through the town with flashing steel helmet and clanging steel sword.

Again, though with difficulty, he resumed his

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

artless conversations with the tubby children in the streets, with the lazing men in the square, with the incredibly piratical-looking mariners who sailed their lateen-rigged boats along the bay, where grotesque pelicans rose with heavy, turgid wings and complained in low, squawking, inadequate cries.

It was afternoon in the town, and life seemed to have dropped its flying shuttle for an hour. An air of quiet sleep was over everything. The oxen slumbered in their trails while their drivers huddled up for sleep in the carts. The pelicans drowsed on the great buoy in the harbour. The gold of the sun's rays and the glistening green of the sea coalesced together in a blue mist that hung over everything.

Lynn had left his hotel in San Turce an hour before and ridden to the town in an electric car with a brown driver and conductor, who slept as they stood at their posts. He descended at the Plaza de Delicias and wandered toward the market. In the Calle Colon he paused a moment to admire the white spacious dwellings with their cool interiors and suggestions of inhabitants peacefully sleeping.

And then in an instant something happened—something with the unreal, deliberate action of a thing done in a theatre.

Like a marionette, a woman ran from the house opposite him—a dark, hawk-nosed, slumbering-eyed woman in a white dress. She stood for a moment

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

panting. Like another marionette, a bull-necked, squat man, in white trousers and shirt and gay red-silk girdle, followed her and began beating her about the head with vicious, deliberate blows. He dragged her back to the door and struck her a crashing blow between the eyes. She reeled.

"Oh," she gasped brokenly, and looked at Lynn with pitiful eyes.

Lynn blazed into fierce passion. "Hey, you, there!" he shouted at the man, and darted forward.

They disappeared inside the house, and the door shut to. Blindly Lynn caught at the handle and wrenched it open. Up the stone stairs he could hear the sound of steps and the sounds of blows and the sound of moans choked in mid-course. He took the stairs three at a time and burst in the heavy folding doors at the top.

He stopped like a man on the brink of a precipice.

"Ah, Colonel Lynn," said a deep, pleasant voice. "You are here at last."

He was in a square, cool room, Lynn saw—a typical Porto Rican room, grass-matted, furnished with light wicker chairs and light tables. The green shutters were to, as if to cut off the light during the hour of siesta. Opposite him, ensconced in a chair and closing a book, which he had evidently been reading while waiting, was the gigantic form of the Manchu leader.

"I am very glad to see you," he said grimly.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

In spite of his tropical suit of white duck, and English that would have been perfect except for the slight slurring of the *r* and his Asian singsong, the Manchu gave Lynn the impression of the yellow implacable East. He might as easily have been clothed in his mandarin's garb of purple and blue silk, with biretta surmounted by its ruby button and with girdle of imperial yellow, so telling was the effect of his presence as he faced his visitor.

Lynn made a movement toward his left arm.

The Manchu began wiping his glasses with a yellow silk handkerchief. "I wouldn't touch that revolver if I were you, Colonel Lynn," he said without looking up. "Behind you are Wah Lee, my man, and a Mr. Golightly, who accompanies me in America. Wah Lee will break your back if you make another movement."

He put his spectacles in a case with nerve-racking quietness, laid a marker in his book and crossed his knees.

"First, don't worry about that little matter in the street. It was not serious—a theatricalism designed to bring you here. It was a pity to take advantage of your chivalry."

Lynn looked from right to left behind him. Close to the wall, on either side of the door, were two attendants—Wah Lee, a vast bulk of a man whom



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

Lynn recognized as the type of Chinese wrestler, a mass of iron muscles with the flashing quickness and sinister skill of the bar-jitsu expert, and the red-headed passenger who had tried to throw him overboard.

"As I said," the Manchu nodded.

"What do you want with me?" Lynn blazed.  
"What am I here for?"

"Don't raise your voice," the Manchu warned; "remember what I said about your back. I want you to corroborate these facts: On the twenty-seventh of August, 1904, on your way home from the Philippines, you were rowing about Canton harbour when, under the prow of an Argentine liner—the *Chico*, I think,—you heard a conversation between the gun-running captain and a resident of Macao which informed you that there was to be an uprising on the nineteenth of September. Am I right?"

"Yes," Lynn nodded. He moistened his lips.  
"Yes, you are right.

"You went immediately to the governor of Macao, Senhor Doctor Bareras—a very able man, who, very naturally, is since dead—and you told him of your discovery. He acquainted the legations in Peking, the officials at Hong-kong, Shanghai, Tsingtau, Mukden and other foreign settlements, with the result that the various hiding places were raided and the rebellion never took place."

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"Why, of course I did," Lynn answered angrily. "Why shouldn't I?"

"For this reason, Colonel Lynn"—the Manchu leaned forward and spoke more gravely than before—"because this rebellion was organized and prepared for years by the Society of Patriotism and Death, whom you call the 'Boxers', by the Lily-Bearers and the Burners of Incense, all upright-minded Chinese people who want their nation for themselves, one and indivisible within the Four Seas—no foreigners to loot it, no other people to battle on it. You destroyed my life work and the life work of my friends."

"What are you going to do?" Lynn blazed. "Kill me?"

"Not kill," the Manchu answered. "Just execute."

The "Thrush of Boriquen" leaned nonchalantly against the green shutters on a house in the Calle Colon, and looked at a door opposite with a slow and malicious grin. Merriment, the merriment of a bad boy, played over his long, dark, horse's face. He whacked at his polished brown shoes with a limber cane and hummed beneath his breath:

*Esta es la linda tierra que buse co yo,  
Es Boriquen la hija, la hija del mar y el sol!*

In the direction of the plaza he caught a glimpse of a small figure in white walking briskly along,

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

swinging a pair of white buckskin gloves in its hand, the gold-and-green scarf on its Panama showing strangely in the tropic heat like some modest northern flower.

The grin on De Azala's face became a chuckle. He woke into a paroxysm of inviting gesture. "*Oiga*, Miss Durrow," he called, "quick—come quick." He took off his hat and jammed it on again; his arm worked like a semaphore. "Quick, quick!"

She came along the pavement, very dignified, a little angry. She looked at him with a dangerous eye.

"Were you calling to me," she demanded, "in that way?"

He laughed again; he slapped his knee; he almost slapped her shoulder.

There was something so spontaneous in his glee that she couldn't help smiling. "What is it?" she asked.

He rocked to and fro with laughter. "I shall die," he groaned. "Assuredly I shall kill myself with this." He stood upright and wiped the tears from his eyes. "Listen," he said dramatically. "Do you see that door? Do you remember your friend, Mr. Lynn? Ha-ha! Ha-ha! In a few moments your friend, Mr. Lynn, will be thrown out of that door with a broken neck. He-he! He-he!"

"A broken neck?" she queried. "Listen, collect yourself; collect yourself, do you hear? before I shake you. What's this?"

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"It's so funny I can't tell it," De Azala laughed. "I was coming down the street and I saw Lynn standing here. A man was beating a girl in the street, and pulled her into the house. Lynn shouted at him and went in after them. Ha-ha! Ha-ha! They'll kick him in the face and pitch him down stairs. Let's wait and see. It's too funny for words."

"I don't think I'd care to wait, thank you," she said stiffly. "And I don't think it's funny. I think Mr. Lynn did what was right. And I'll tell you something," she added coldly; "if anybody's neck's going to get broken, it will not be Mr. Lynn's. It will be that of the gentleman who was beating the girl, and Mr. Lynn will do the breaking."

"Eh?" said the "Thrush." He seemed to have forgotten his glee for the moment. "That's curious."

"What's curious?" she asked.

"Why, the house the pair came out of was number sixteen, the house that the big Chinaman on board rented furnished for two weeks from Señor Bibe. Funny there should be a fight there."

"The Chinaman, Lieng-hsin?" she asked hurriedly.

"I don't know his name—but that big seven-footer. It doesn't matter. Lynn will be out head-foremost in a minute. You'll see it, if you wait. He'll get fighting enough in there. Ha-ha! Ha-ha!" He went off into another spasm of laughter.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

She caught him suddenly by the shoulder. "Listen," she snapped. She shook him viciously. "Stop it—stop it right now! I'm going in there. Do you understand? Wake up. Do you understand? I'm going in, and if I'm not out in fifteen minutes collect every policeman in town and batter your way in. Do you understand me?"

He looked at her in amazement. The cane dropped from his hand. "What?" he gasped.

"Never mind what," she urged. "If I'm not out in fifteen minutes, every policeman you can get!" She dashed across the street and paused before entering the house. "Fifteen minutes, remember!"

"And there," grumbled the "Thrush of Boriquen" in wide-mouthed disgust, "goes the woman who I thought had a sense of humour."

Every detail of the grotesque scene impressed itself on Lynn as a stylus impresses itself on wax—the room cool and bare as a judicial chamber; the gigantic mandarin in the chair, pronouncing a sentence as dispassionately as though he were quoting an analect of Confucius; the two huge figures on each side of the door, the Chinese attendant and the renegade Golightly. On a chair near the Chinese servant's he saw a horrible, brazen, pear-like gag and a long thong of leather; in Golightly's fist, as he stood with his arms folded, a glimpse of grey pigskin hinted at a blackjack. On the table,

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

with its cloth of intricate, gem-like embroidery, a large fruit basket stood, half filled with sawdust, and a long, narrow, black case, inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl, that he felt housed a sword.

If it had to be, thank heaven it would be quick and by clean steel!

"You were adjudged guilty and condemned at a meeting of the principal lodge in Nanking," Lieng-hsin continued, "and I decided to carry out the matter myself, as in your case it's rather difficult. Twice on board ship my men failed in their instructions."

And as he stood, held by some power that seemed nothing short of hypnosis, Lynn felt that the thing was an unreal dream, as unreal as a piece at the theatre. Along the wall crayon portraits of people hung—crude things that gave the lie to the tragedy being enacted; a fly buzzed loudly in the room; a bullock cart creaked without. In the streets a girl began singing the never-ending song of Porto Rica:

*Esta es la linda tierra que busco yo,  
Es Boriquen la hija, la hija del mar y el sol!*

The sound of the words roused Lynn to a white fury. "This is ridiculous!" he attacked savagely. "What right have you to adjudge me? What right have you to sentence me? What crime have I done? I warned my own people because I didn't want them to be massacred in cold blood, as was done when



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

the Boxers turned out four years before. I'd do it again to-morrow. Do you hear? I'd do——"

"Very well," the Manchu took up, "I shall tell you: The crime you committed was to conspire with and help the enemies of China. I take on myself to sentence you in the name of a nation in the way of whose progress you have stood. The progress was stopped and someone must suffer. You stopped it, and the person to suffer is you——"

"If you call progress cutting throats," Lynn growled.

"I call progress," the Manchu replied, "any step taken by any means to rid China of the leeches who are killing her—even cutting throats."

There was a quick patter of feet in the corridor; they paused for a moment. Then someone fumbled at the knob of the door. There was a resounding, continual crash as it was shaken passionately; someone beat on it with clenched hands.

"Open the door!" a voice cried, and Lynn started as he recognized it.

The eye of the old mandarin covered Lynn with a mocking smile. He was waiting to hear the soldier of fortune cry out for help. The smile touched Lynn as a whip touches a horse. He squared his jaw.

"Open the door!" came the voice again. "There is someone inside. I know it."

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

The mandarin leaned back in his seat and studied his fingers.

Again the door rattled under a vicious shaking on the knob. "If the door is not opened immediately," the voice came firmly, "I shall call the police and have it broken down."

"Open the door, Wah Lee," the Manchu commanded. The stocky wrestler turned and threw the folds apart.

Like something driving through the air, Constance Durrow flashed into the room. Her face was flushed and her eyes were blazing. With a sweeping glance she took in everything from the Manchu in his chair to the guards at the door. She swung around to Lynn. "What is wrong, Mr. Lynn?" she demanded.

Lynn looked around the room nonplussed. His brow wrinkled and his voice stuttered as he spoke. "I don't know," he said. "It's rather hard to explain."

She turned away from him impatiently. She looked at the giant mandarin squarely between the eyes. "What is it?" she demanded again.

Lieng-hsin rose with a bow. "Colonel Lynn and I, dear young lady," he explained, "were having an entirely private conversation—we shall have to defer it for the present, Colonel Lynn—when you came into the room."

"You were holding him here," she accused hotly.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"He was in some danger. The authorities shall know of this."

"I am not holding him here," the Manchu answered suavely. "And if Colonel Lynn requires the help of the authorities to settle a purely private matter, I am disappointed in Colonel Lynn. As for holding him, he is free to go any moment. You will see this lady out, Colonel Lynn. We shall finish the matter some other time." And he moved to hold open the door.

She felt suddenly abashed and ill at ease before the manifest embarrassment of this soldier of fortune and the suave, smiling presence of the polished mandarin. She opened her mouth to speak and closed it again. She blushed red to the tips of her ears.

Lynn turned to the Manchu with his obstinate jaw thrust out and his eyes flashing. "I won't go," he said, "till this thing is settled. Let us finish it. What's the use of going into the street? To be safe for a while? I'll be always a mark for a hatchet, or a rope, or a drug, and you'll have me some time."

She shrank toward the door a little, suddenly white. So there was danger. Thank heaven she had known of it, and come!

Lynn's jaw worked viciously and his hands went out in free, swinging gestures. The mandarin stood, with arms crossed, like a figure carved in stone.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

He looked at the soldier with opaque, expressionless gaze.

"I acknowledge no crime," Lynn went on. "My conscience is clear. I did what any white man should have done under the circumstances. Oriental ethics are no good to me. I think with the brain God gave me, the western man's brain."

A warm fire coursed through Constance Durrow's heart as she heard Lynn speak and saw him stand up and face his enemy with hard, dauntless speech. This was John Lynn!

"But if you must kill me, you must." He laughed. "Hatchet, or sword, or thong, or anything—I'm not afraid of it or you; I've seen it face to face too often. Only I dislike it coming at me out of the dark, not giving me a chance. That's a coward's end."

He made a few paces about the room as he spoke, head thrown high, right fist smashing into open left hand. Constance Durrow thought, as she looked on white and petrified, that a new, appraising, admiring light was creeping—in spite of himself—into the Chinese leader's eyes.

Lynn wheeled about. "Listen," he commanded. "You believe you're right and you want to kill me. I believe I'm right and don't want to be killed. Let me fight it out. If you can kill me, kill me—and give me a fighting chance."

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

The mandarin walked back to his chair, his head inclined to one side and lips pursed. "My fighting days are over," he said, a little sadly. "I am afraid I am an old man." He thought again. "And you can't settle it with my servant, or descend to fight with that renegade." He sat down and patted the arms of the chair in indecision. He suddenly smiled up. "I am afraid that we shall have to count your fight as over, and I shall have to consider the affair closed officially."

"What do you mean?" Constance Durrow asked. She took a quick step forward.

The Manchu smiled at her eagerness. "I mean, dear young lady," he said, "that the whole matter is over and will never be brought up again. Colonel Lynn is no longer in any danger—Colonel Lynn, you have my word on that—and I should be very glad to count such an enemy as a friend."

"Thanks, sir," Lynn said simply. "I'm glad."

The Manchu turned to the girl. That vague, kindly smile of his played about his eyes. "If it hadn't been for you, dear young lady," he said, "the affair would have been settled otherwise before Colonel Lynn had time to make his point. I'll admit that my man was about to gag and bind your friend when your knock came to the door."

Lynn shifted uneasily. He became red with embarrassment. He went up to her with shy, outstretched

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

hand. "I don't know how to thank you," he said in confusion.

A queer, hot shame flooded her. Somehow, as she had been standing there, she had imagined him doing something else in thanking her, something more in keeping with his romantic career. She was in love with him, she knew, and in her fancy she had seen him stretch both arms about her in thanks and love, and had seen them together up-anchor and away on that star-gazing quest of his for Bimini. And then suddenly to be confronted with this shy, embarrassed manner and thanked in these conventional words! It made her suddenly coldly angry. Perhaps, she said to herself, he was ashamed to have been helped by a woman!

"Not at all," she said with deliberate coldness. "I don't know whether I have been any help at all. I'd have done as much for anybody, for anybody at all."

Lynn looked at her confusedly. He felt like a man who has been helped up after a fall, and then suddenly struck in the face by his rescuer.

"When do you leave on your search for Bimini?" she asked.

"On Saturday."

"I shan't be able to see you again before you go," she said. She tugged her glove on and put out her hand. "I wish you wonderful success."



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

Good-bye, Colonel Lynn." She bowed in reply to the Manchu's courtly salute, and left.

And she swung out of the room while Lynn, who knew nothing of women, looked after her as though a thunderbolt had fallen on him, and Lieng-hsin, who was the wisest man in China, let an amused flicker show for an instant in his usually opaque eyes.

### III—THE "THRUSH OF BORIQUEN"

He leaned over the crumbling parapets of the old Spanish tower and regarded the sea change, like a chameleon, from a blue that was like turquoise to a green like emerald. He saw the stretches of water gilded by the sun to the bright saffron of Alaskan gold, and the white foam caps that showed like lilies in a pond. He knitted his long brown fingers together, and a mist came into his chocolate-brown eyes. Very dreamily the eternal, plaintive song rose spontaneously to his lips:

*Esta es la linda tierra que busco yo,  
Es Boriquen la hija, la hija del mar y el sol!*

Constance Durrow leaned forward. She touched him lightly on the arm. "Why do you love Porto Rico so much?" she asked.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"I don't know," he replied simply. "I was just born to it as I was born to a heart and two eyes."

He was thirty-six now when Constance Durrow knew him—Pedro de Azala, the "Thrush of Boriquen." Eighteen years before, the trouble with him began in Porto Rico, when the undersized brown men of Spain were fighting the barrel-chested soldiery from America. Old officials in Ponce and Mayaguez will tell of his sudden raids on corporals' guards of American troops, on ammunition and food wagons, of daring highway robberies on citizens. The war is over these many years, and he has been pardoned for these things. But the same thing was practised on the Spanish troops.

On a year's luxurious trip to Paris he supported himself by selling his admirers fictitious and rich plantations in Porto Rico. He had even the audacity to sell three of the old Spanish guns on the Morro Castle to a Greek collector. They tell also in San Juan how he once stole the President of Brazil's yacht, standing in the pilot house with a gun at the captain's head. They tell of his holding for ransom a New York banker, and refusing to allow the old gourmet to eat anything except alligator pears until the amount demanded was paid. For none of these things was any action taken against him. For one reason, he was the "Thrush of Boriquen," admittedly

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

a genius and admittedly mad. For another, he could write satires that would cut and sting like a whip. A third reason was his ready use of knife and gun.

But something in the man pleased Constance Durrow—perhaps it was the same as in John Lynn, the free romance, the recklessness, the care-free manner. He was the antithesis of Lynn when it came to motives, but the romance and adventure were there. She liked his poetry, too, as much of it as she could read in Spanish, and she liked his patriotism.

“What about your friend, Mr. Lynn?” he asked.

“Oh, I don’t know,” she said impatiently, “and I don’t care.” But, even as she frowned, she blushed a little—a faint, rose-like thing on her cheeks that suggested dawn.

“He will never find Bimini,” said the poet. “He has gone off to the Virgins to look for it. Only three people in this generation have seen it, and two are dead, the seaman Ramon Garcia, and Father Burlan, a little priest from Ponce. The fruit is there, and the flowers, and the little island not larger than a few acres of ground. There is gold in the sand, though we know of none in the rocks; humming birds, too, and little chattering marmosets; and the Fountain is there.”

She turned on him suddenly, as she had turned on John Lynn. “Do you mean to tell me,” she asked slowly, “that you, too, believe in Bimini?”

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"I do more," he replied, with eyebrows raised in irritation at her tone of disbelief. "I know where it is."

For fifteen days John Lynn beat southward, past the white towns of St. Thomas, past St. Kitts and Antigua, past Guadeloupe and Martinique. He raised the Barbados and went farther, until Guiana showed like a dirty smudge on the horizon. The sea sparkled; the breeze blew like subtle perfumes; great birds wailed overhead; and the white yacht cut into the swell like a plough, or heeled over to the breeze with a flurry of foam and a graceful dip of sails.

The four black seamen padded to and fro, pulling on creaking ropes or pushing on the boom with slow, powerful motions. The Dominican quartermaster crooned over his wheel in monotonous, semi-African quavers and minors that gave the impression of humming bees. They shortened sail and ran into little harbours of islands which the makers of charts had marked with insignificant dots, and John Lynn ploughed the undergrowth with a queer, dogged persistence that showed method in spite of the madness of his quest.

He found islands golden with the luxuriance of oranges, redolent of pine balsams, gay with poinciana and arbutus, dotted with stunted fig trees. There were humming-birds in plenty and chattering

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

monkeys. The black and bronze and chocolate people of the islands looked at him in mute wonder as he walked among them, trim in khaki and puttees and sun helmet, answering his grotesque questions about a Fountain of Youth with amazement in their round eyes.

The bo'sun—a thin, hatchet-faced negro with the saturnine eye of a voodoo priest—swept away this talk of fountains with an impatient shrug. "He's looking for treasure," he sneered.

The round, Dominican quartermaster, whose hair curled white on his black scalp, smiled to himself. Many years, and a child's heart, and a great kindness for other men had given the old man wisdom. He understood that the grim lines about Lynn's face, and the tense pain in it, came not from any sordid desire of things outside but from a lack of something within. "It is not for treasure of gold he is looking," the old quartermaster said, "but for treasure of the heart."

Dreamily John Lynn went from one island to another, searching, the white sails carrying him when the wind held, the powerful marine engine driving the yacht forward during calm, the bowsprit dripping, the sun throwing up the gilded letters of the name he had fancifully painted on the bow: "*Bimini*." But there was no Bimini for him, no island that fitted in with the description old Ponce de Leon had passed on nearly three centuries ago,

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

no bower of flowers and fruit and gold, with a fountain whose virtue was such as to make old men young.

Northward islands dropped behind the horizon and southward others rose like suns. But he could not see them except as he might see the fingers on his hand. Opal moons rose and scattered silver. The southern cross hove over the edge of the waters—the false cross and the true one; but he was blind to them. When not plunging through an island he was leaning over the rail of the yacht, looking at the water with blank, undiscerning eyes. “He is thinking of what he shall do with his money when he finds it,” sneered the saturnine boatswain.

“Leave him alone,” the old quartermaster smiled; “a man’s heart, if true, finds its way home through darkness.”

But the dream of Bimini was fading out of Lynn’s heart and mind as the dusky glamour of twilight fades before the white light of the moon. The figure of Constance Durrow rose before him in every step he took and with every wave that swept by. He saw her in his mind’s eye, as last he had seen her in actuality in the Manchu’s bare, cool room where she had saved him from the gag and the executioner’s broad, curved sword; he saw her fine, spiritual face held high, chin tilted, bronze eyes cold and formal.



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

What had he done to deserve that frigid parting, he asked? He had had little to do with women; but, good heavens! he said, they couldn't be as unreasonable as all that—save a man's life one minute and snub him the next! If it had been a man he would have gone to him immediately and asked what was wrong, but with women!—one never knew what to do with them.

He had come down to Porto Rico with a dream in his mind that was becoming more clear and compelling every moment. It had blossomed under the Caribbean sky like a flower. And now, as it were, it was snowed under, blighted, nipped, by this demeanour of a girl he had never known until one short month before. He thought it over for a minute. "But I don't want dreams," he said impatiently and illogically; "I want actualities."

He did not know what it was that had gone wrong with him; he was too shy, if the truth must be told, to confess to himself that he was in love with Constance Durrow. But all the time the thought of her and the memory of her and the desire to see and be near her crept on him like a quartan fever. In dreams he saw her face, sometimes cold and haughty, as when he had last looked on it; sometimes warm and sympathetic, as when she had wished him and his wild-goose quest speedy and complete success; and sometimes bright and smiling, as when he had seen her on shipboard.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

When would he see her again? he thought, and suddenly he stopped, cold with a strange, aching fear. Perhaps she would have returned to New York before he got back, and then—would he ever see her?

The yacht was driving toward a low, green island like a shrubbery, that was one of the few places left for him to search. The course led into a diminutive harbour through two walls of piled granite boulders like a gate. Already the hands were dropping the mainsail, hauling on the gaff, while the rings rattled at the mainmast. Suddenly he drove his right fist into his left hand with a vicious crack.

The hatchet-faced boatswain looked up. "He has given up his fool chase," he remarked sardonically to the old quartermaster.

"No, sir," the quartermaster nodded back with emphasis; "he's on the right scent. He's like a hunting hound with his nose to the wind."

"Hard alee!" Lynn called suddenly. Decision rang in his voice like the brazen note of a trumpet. "Hard alee, and up sail, and back to Porto Rico!"

. . . . .

The "Thrush of Boriquen" pushed away the emptied teapot on the café table, settled back for a smoke, and looked about the room with a satisfied smile.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

All around, men and an occasional woman were having their five-o'clock refreshment at little iron tables, between which white-jacketed waiters scurried like mice. Outside, down the high, blue street, a clamour of business and life rose in a sort of pæan; oxen strained creakingly at the cars; motors barked like dogs; a beggar whined for coppers; and vociferous newsboys shrieked headlines at the top of their thin voices.

"To-morrow," the "Thrush" purred as he crossed one leg over the other, "to-morrow morning, at break of day."

He looked about the room again, and laughed to himself. All about him he recognized old admirers, old friends, old enemies. To-morrow he would play his maddest prank, embark on his biggest adventure. How they would all laugh, those old comrades, if they knew about it! The "Thrush of Boriquen" had lived up to his reputation, they would say.

"It is a great feat," he said to himself, "and only I could have done it."

To-morrow he was leaving, when the sun rose, to show Bimini to this beautiful, capable and rich girl from New York. She was going to sail alone—except for a coloured maid—with the "Thrush" to his fabled island, the fabled island of Ponce de Leon, where the Fountain of Youth was flowing.

The "Thrush of Boriquen" smiled as he thought

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

of how it had all come about. He understood the influence that he had worked on Constance Durrow. First, there had been her own innate love of romance, that had made Bimini nearly a reality if not actually one. Then the influence of Lynn, the magnetic soldier of fortune, the cavalier of romance, and of himself, the poet-adventurer with his brigand's reputation, had fanned her dream to fire, had given her courage to start out alone on her quest.

Lynn! He laughed as he thought of Lynn. He knew that Constance Durrow had been in a vague, spiritual contact with the captain-at-arms, and that it had been broken. There was a pique in the matter. He knew that one of the factors actuating her in going with him was the possibility of finding Bimini before John Lynn did, and of a triumph over Lynn. What he did not know was that she wanted to find the island—if it were to be found—also for the pure pleasure of bringing the soldier there, of presenting to him, with her own two hands, his heart's desire. Her six years' experience of the world, and of handling big things and big men, made her believe herself capable of going alone with anybody. The "Thrush" laughed.

And how cleverly he had done everything! He had not suggested; he had not persuaded. He had just talked with the fire in his words and the light in his eyes he knew so well how to put there when

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

occasion needed them. And then he had been as patient as a cat at a mouse hole. And in the end it came, as he knew it would come.

"Why don't you show it to me?" she asked suddenly.

"Very well," he had answered lightly; "I will."

He had said nothing to anybody; he had too much to risk. And she had said nothing; she was afraid of being laughed at, and perhaps by some means forcibly restrained. In open secrecy they had worked the plan out.

He told her the island lay south of Haiti. A sailing master of Ponce would take them there.

She agreed.

Three days would be all they needed, he said nonchalantly.

She nodded in agreement.

This would be his last great adventure, he decided, the last prank of the "Thrush of Boriquen." After this he would settle down and live happily, he grinned. An old line came into his head: "Once aboard the lugger." He chuckled. Once touching at Haiti or Domingo, he thought, and he could get someone who would perform a legal marriage. She would fight like a wild cat, scream, struggle, refuse. He knew how to handle that. The maid? He drew his finger across his neck in a chuckling grimace. Once married, he would treat her gently

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

for six months, and then she would eat out of his hand like a tamed bird.

"Women," he said solemnly, "are great fools."

The reasons he wanted to marry her were three-fold: First, there was money; second, there was the desire to cheat John Lynn, to play an elaborate and—what he considered—whimsical joke on the soldier; and, third, he liked her; she was a beautiful, spirited thing, the sort of wife a poet should have.

But he must be careful, he told himself shrewdly. If any of the Americans or Europeans on the island should come to know of his plan they would have no compunction in shooting him down like a dog. He put this unpleasant reflection aside and began musing over Bimini—Bimini which had given him the opening he required!

"This Bimini, I take it," he mused, "is a sort of vision, and later an actuality evolved out of one's desire for romance and poetry and adventure. That is what Constance wants. That's what she shall get in me." A quizzical thought struck him, and a smile played over his face. He rose and tapped himself lightly on the chest. "Why, I, I am Bimini!"

The white fifty-footer tore out of the harbour like a hurricane. Foam flew sideways in two broad, white ribbons from the bow, and bubbled like a spring from the whirring propeller behind. Mainsail



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

and jib bent before the wind in a gentle creak. Morro Castle flew by, and a wave was shattered like glass under the crash of the bow.

Forward Lynn stood crouched holding on to rigging with one hand, while his glasses swept the sea. The hatchet-faced boatswain and two other hands tugged at the strings of the reefing. The white-haired negro steersman leaned wrestling to the wheel.

Aft in the cockpit sat Lieng-hsin, the giant Manchu, while his servant, Wah Lee, polished the barrel of a hunting rifle with an oiled rag. The mandarin was reading in a thick volume, the gold lettering on whose blue cover proclaimed it to be *The Starry Sentinel*, by Pedro de Azala, the "Thrush of Boriquen." Occasionally the Chinese noble nodded in appreciation of a fine passage. Lynn still looked on at the sea with face grey with anxiety.

"Listen," the mandarin called: "'One night, when the moon of Boriquen rises and spangles the ocean with silver, I shall sail upon it in a caravel of sandalwood, chanting measured sonnets, and leaning forward to embrace the white reflection I shall die—a fitting end for a great poet!' That is worthy of Tu Fu, whom we call the God of Verse."

"I know this about his poetry," Lynn barked back, his face suffused with anger, "that he will never write another line from the moment I set eye on him, for I shall kill him. So help me heaven!"

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"That is assured," the mandarin replied gently, and returned to reading his book.

Lynn ground his teeth with rage as he remembered what had happened since his landing in San Juan hardly two hours before. He had come up the harbour with a brave show of white sail, skimming over the water like a swallow. He had hoped Constance Durrow would see and relent toward him. He had been looking for her as they drew up to the stone wharf, even though he had no reason to expect her. He sprang from the bows to the pier.

There confronted him the vast, pillar-like form of Leing-hsin, the Boxer leader, followed by his servant, laden with two gun cases. "Are you prepared to leave this minute for a four-day trip?" he asked Lynn.

"Yes, but——"

The Manchu cut him short. "Get in, Wah Lee," he directed. He stepped into the cockpit. "Your young friend, Miss Durrow," he explained, "left this morning alone, except for a maid, with the Porto Rican poet to discover Bimini also. The man is an exceedingly good poet, but he has eccentricities. I propose that we should follow after to see that she is neither bored—nor annoyed."

"Miss Durrow left this morning?" Lynn looked blank. "Alone? With that scoundrel?"

"This morning," the Manchu repeated. He

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

leaned back in the cockpit and lit a cigar. "At daybreak."

Lynn leaped on board with a oath. He turned on the gaping hands. "Push off!" he shouted. "Full speed ahead and up-sail. Do you hear? Up-sail, and out!"

The yacht had torn past the black, diminutive Dominican gunboat lying peacefully in the harbour, the trim revenue cutter battered by her long voyage from Hawaii, past the interned liners and the rakish Chilean barquentines.

Lynn turned to the mandarin in his flat, direct manner. "Why are you coming with me?" he asked.

"I am coming with you," Lieng-hsin answered, "because I owe you something for a very bad half-hour you probably remember; because I like the little lady who was brave enough to enter and defy the whole Society of the Mailed Fist, which very few people have done and lived; and because you are a man in a temper, and hardly able to think clearly."

He leaned back with his fingers in the pages of the "Thrush's" book. He eased his great horn spectacles about his ears.

"For example," he asked softly, "what course are you prepared to sail?"

"Back the way I came," Lynn answered. "The boat must have passed us at dawn."

"That, I think," the Manchu laughed, "would be a false move. De Azala would hardly take the

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

chance of meeting you. He would go in the opposite direction, due west. He would make for the place it would be hardest to bring him back from—that would be Haiti or San Domingo. He would also choose an accessible and not very populous port. There is an island south of Domingo, called Saona; that would hit his requirements, I think. Yes, I don't think you can be far wrong in heading for Saona; he would have brains enough to choose that."

The quartermaster hung undecided over the wheel.

Lynn thought for a minute. Again he drove his fist into his palms. "West sou'west!" he snapped. "Hold her to it!"

They swung about in a segment of pearl foam.

In front of them, across the waters, the sun shone in a subdued red, like fields of clover. Waves lilted as they came toward them in a harmonious, plashing croon.

So all night they tore through the blue Caribbean like a Gulf storm, the water pouring over the gunwale in a swift torrent, masts creaking, the gas exhaust barking like a roused dog. Forward the hatchet-faced boatswain shot the acetylene searchlight over the water like a hunter's spear, his teeth bared with the excitement of the chase, his eyes rolling. Crouching to port and holding on as the yacht heeled to the swell, Lynn swept the waves with his night

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

glasses. The steersman was tense at his wheel. Even the mandarin's yellow serving man raised his nostrils like a bloodhound. Only the Manchu was imperturbable as he sat reading his book by the swinging lamp. Occasionally he would close it and look at Lynn.

"You know," he said suddenly, "that Ponce de Leon did at length discover Bimini and the Fountain of Youth."

"I think you're wrong," Lynn shook his head.

"No, I am right," the mandarin persisted. "He found, as he was about to die, that he had known it nearly two score years before. Do you know the manuscript of the Spanish priest which he used in his search? There is something written on it."

"Some sentiment about a man's heart being Bimini and the Fountain of Youth in it, and about a woman opening it for him," Lynn said impatiently. "Nonsense!"

"Nonsense?" Lieng-hsin smiled. "'A deep stream is shallow until one wades in it,'" he quoted; "'an old man is a wiseacre until he is shown to be a fool.'"

But Lynn was in no mood for vague, polite discussion. His eyes were bloodshot now, and his face was wet from the flying spray. He made his way forward through the rigging and looked out from the bow. Dimly in imagination he saw the brown form of the "Thrush" before him, and his right hand went to the left side of his belt where he had strapped on

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

his heavy navy revolver. The feelings in him were too bitter for that, he felt. He wanted something with more fight to it, and his hand crept back to the right-hand side, where his sheath knife hung in its chamois scabbard.

Dawn came, and then morning, with a fresh breeze and a tang of salt in the air—a morning that seemed like a miniature spring. The yacht still flashed ahead.

A tinge of grey was in Lynn's tanned face, and it had sunk into heavy lines. Even the hawk-faced boatswain seemed beatenly tired, and the white-haired quartermaster had lost his eternal smile. Only the Manchu remained calm and fresh as ever as he clambered up from the little cabin and began reading again. He was on the last poem but one.

"This 'Thrush' is a genuine poet," he told Lynn. "Here is a sonnet which compares Porto Rico to a carved emerald in the signet ring of God."

But Lynn had no time for poetry. He still swept the sea with glasses, and held on to the rigging with tense, white-knuckled hands.

The Manchu turned to the last poem in the book, "The Old Age of Ramon Bolivar." He settled his spectacles and began reading intently, with a light of deep appreciation on his face.

Lynn's jaws suddenly snapped. "I've got it!" he shouted, and slapped his thigh.



## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

Two dirty white dots appeared southward, peeping over the horizon like bushes over a wall. They grew larger and resolved themselves into the angular tops of sails.

"If it's a two-masted schooner," said the Manchu, "that's it." He went on reading his book.

"Mark for the sail to sou'west!" Lynn shouted exultantly to the steersman. "Shake out a reef!" he ordered the hands. "Pile on every drop you've got!" he called to the man at the engine. He moved about the bow like a dog straining at the leash.

The exhaust broke into a staccato frenzy. The sails swung over to the wind as if they had been pushed aside by a giant's hand. The sails rose on the horizon. The lines of the schooner began to show up rakish and black.

The Manchu glanced across the waves for a moment, nodded, and returned to his book. Presently he took off his glasses and polished the crystals, his brow furrowed as he thought over the lines he had just read. "Po-Chü-i, the 'Tenderest Singer,' might have written them," he said aloud to himself. "They are magnificent."

The breeze was falling off and the sails slacking. The schooner to the south of them seemed becalmed. Already they could distinguish bowsprit and hull, and the bulk of the cabin hatch and the high Spanish rudder.

Wah Lee, the Chinese attendant, began opening

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

the gun cases. He brought out a short Springfield rifle.

The mandarin looked at him over the horn rims of his glasses. "No, not the Springfield," he directed. "Use the Ross."

Forward in the bow Lynn was crouching like a panther preparing to jump. He fumbled at his belt where knife and revolver hung. He snapped his fingers impatiently, as to a dog.

The sail cracked to the falling wind, and the hands began reefing in. The noise of the whirring propeller and churning foam splashed like a waterfall. They could see faint, minute figures clustered about the taffrail of the schooner now, like a child's tin toys.

Wah Lee began methodically loading the magazine of the Ross rifle. The mandarin read on.

The figures on the stern of the schooner resolved themselves into separate entities with every driving foot the yacht forged ahead.

As Lynn leaned crouching forward, with the wind and spray lashing into his face, he felt a savage desire to jump overboard and swim toward the bark with long, swinging, trudgen strokes. What had become of her? he was asking himself blindly. How was she? Perhaps she wouldn't want to go back with him. By heaven, she should! he swore aloud to himself. After he had finished with the "Thrush" he would make her come on board, if he had to drag her there.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

The black schooner was nearer every instant now. Lynn could see the faces dimly at the stern—black faces with occasional brown ones, and one tanned one that he felt somehow was that of the "Thrush of Boriquen." The figure with the tanned face disappeared for an instant, and reappeared with something long and slender in its hands. It leaned over the rail. The schooner was hardly four hundred yards away.

"I wish he wouldn't stand up there in that ridiculous way," the mandarin complained to himself as he watched Lynn perfectly outlined against the stretch of white sail.

Something sang through the air like a humming wasp. There was a faint puff of smoke from the stern of the schooner. The hands on the yacht crouched against the boom of the mainmast.

They flashed a hundred yards nearer. Again the figure leaned over the stern of the schooner. There was a sharp crack, and a hole appeared in the canvas three feet from where Lynn was standing. The mandarin took one last look at his volume. Lynn drew his huge navy revolver with a snap; he balanced it in his fist.

The mandarin looked toward the schooner. "Yes, that is the poet," he nodded.

They could nearly distinguish the "Thrush's" features by now. There was a crack of splitting wood and white chips flew from the mainmast.

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

The mandarin closed the volume and stood up. He watched Lynn drop to one knee with his revolver in readiness. "It is not good for a woman to see her future husband kill a man," he said to himself. He took one last look at the gold name on the blue volume. "It's a pity," he murmured; "such a good poet!"

He looked to where the "Thrush" was leaning far over the taffrail, cheek cuddled to the lock of his rifle, taking long and elaborate aim. The Manchu turned to the crouching Chinaman at his feet. "Kill him, Wah Lee," he said.

The stocky Mongol dropped to one knee and raised his piece to his cheek with the precision of a sharpshooter. For a moment he glanced down the sights. His yellow finger crooked. There was a crack, a flash and a puff of smoke.

The "Thrush's" gun fell from his hands. He seemed to go limp, like a badly filled bag. His hands wavered out, he slid forward, then slowly, grotesquely, he dived, like a comic exhibition in a pool.

Lynn swung around; the revolver sagged in his hand. "What the——" he began.

"I am sorry," Lieng-hsin said suavely; "but it's much better so."

He threw the blue volume overboard.

The man at the engine throttled down as they swung in. The white-headed quartermaster gave a deft flick to the wheel. For an instant the vessels

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

nearly touched. Lynn sprang forward like a catamount. He caught the rigging and swung on the deck of the schooner. For a moment he glared at the terrified black faces in the stern.

"Where is—— Where is——" he bellowed.

Someone pointed forward. He rushed along the deck to the bow.

There was a white figure against the rail, shrinking back to it—white-faced and gaunt-eyed—while a negro maid cowered against her skirts.

With one sweep Lynn caught the figure up in his arms.

She looked at him a moment, trembling. Then suddenly her hands went about his neck in a vicelike grip. "Oh, John Lynn!" she sobbed.

They sat together, very still and very happy, on the narrow bench that circled the cockpit.

The exhaust no longer coughed and spluttered; the sails no more bulged forward under press of wind. Very gently the yacht drifted along, the waves making a little clicking noise against the sides. An opalescent moon hung shapelessly in the sky, and the stars stood out in faint white myriads and battalions. And the sea was a field of glory.

"But you never found Bimini," she said.

"I don't want Bimini any longer." He laughed low. "I am happy. I want no Fountain of Youth any longer. I feel re-made."

## THE ISLAND OF YOUTH

"And I want nothing in the world," she answered. There was a moment of silence.

Suddenly he stood up with the old familiar gesture, right fist crashing into left palm. "By George!" he burst out.

"What is it?" she asked, a little frightened.

"Do you remember," he said, "that old manuscript of Ponce de Leon's, with what was scrawled in the margin: 'And in every man's heart there is Bimini, and the Fountain of Youth——' "

" 'And the hand of a woman shall unseal it,' " she finished for him, " 'and make the spring to flow.' "

He was silent again for a moment, while her fingers lingered caressingly over the scar on his right hand.

"I have found Bimini," he said huskily as he looked at her.

And he turned away from her—for he was new to love yet—lest she should discover the moisture in his eyes.



## II

### THE GREAT GIFT

SHE took up the newspaper from her neat sewing-table again and, as she looked at the picture for the third time within an hour, she imagined the man's eyes to be gazing into hers, and a faint flush suffused her face. She felt a thrill as she noted the dark, melancholy pupils; the fine aquiline nose; the silken brown beard; the long, nervous fingers holding the book. And for the third time, too, she read over the dry newspaper account of the capture of the famous Russian rebel and royalist.

"The Grand Duke Lyoff," she read aloud, trying the sound of his name and exulting in its sonority. She blanched a little as she read the careless last line: "It is practically certain that he will be executed."

She dropped the paper in her lap and, leaning back in her armchair, she began dreaming. About her the neat sitting-room seemed to mass like the background of a portrait: the old furniture mellow and glistening; the chaste, prim curtains; the subdued light filtering in through the bay window; the silent bird in its cage. Even the books, heavily bound and golden-lettered, and the old prints on the wall

68

## THE GREAT GIFT

seemed appurtenances to her personality—as much so as her lace and subdued jewellery. Outside, a big garden bloomed and the sun fell over it in a fine golden shower, but one felt that it was excluded from this room as being too garish, too full of life.

She had passed her forty-second birthday a week ago, and she was thinking now, as she had been thinking every day since, of what life had been. As far back as she could remember—and that was thirty-five years—she had been sitting demurely in a room with prints and a bird that sang rarely. At seven, she could remember her aunt, as old then as she herself was now, dressing her in a white lace dress with a blue sash and placing her on a high chair, to sit primly—as a lady should, she said. In her whole life, she felt now, there had been as little occurrence as might happen to another person in the space of a week.

Her father and mother she could not remember. Her father had been a young naval lieutenant, tall and dazzling and romantic, who had swept the prim daughter of the Adams house off her feet and married her in a perfumed haze of romantic glory. The Adams family, the grim shipbuilder and his God-fearing progeny, had never approved the match. Lieutenant Nichols was lost on his vessel eighteen months after, and his wife, for a reason that everyone except the Adams family conceded to be a

## THE GREAT GIFT

broken heart, died a month after hearing the news. And little Hester Nichols was left to aunts and uncles.

"A regular Adams," the aunts and uncles boasted of her. "A little lady!"

A beautiful child, they said she was, and she knew it herself now from the faded daguerreotypes she had seen. She had her father's dark, romantic eyes and her father's spirited way when she was young. If she had been allowed to grow up as she might have, she would have been as romantic and dashing as the lieutenant. But she had been like a flower pressed between the leaves of a book, preserving its form and colour for decades, but with the life gone from it. They had given her a governess with whom she went on walks, with whom she read, with whom she played.

"A lady does this," the governess had always told her, "and a lady does that." And already at that age she had begun to feel that she was circumscribed by a code of formality as rigid as court etiquette.

At school the code was enlarged upon, made more precise. She was taught that men were a sex with whom a lady must never be left alone, never appear cordial toward. In the matter of marriage her elders would choose a man suitable for her to love. Marriages were pointed out to her

## THE GREAT GIFT

which fulfilled all the requirements of family and money and morals.

"A beautiful union," they had described each of these examples; but to the young Hester's eyes they had appeared colourless and drab.

So she had gone to church every Sunday, primly, with her large prayer-book in her small, gloved hand. Primly she had gone through the garden and through the house. Primly she called and received callers. And every summer she and her aunts and uncles had gone from Salem to Vineyard Haven and spent there three uneventful months. Once, for a year, her Aunt Elizabeth had taken her to Europe, a trip she had not enjoyed much, seeing the restrictions put upon her. One by one the elder Adamses had died, some of age and some by violence, and some by pestilence and disease, until there was none left in the house by the water-front in Salem excepting Aunt Elizabeth and herself.

She had had three offers of marriage in those years before she was twenty-five. The first had been from a young curate at their church. He approached her with rehearsed and respectful sentences.

"You must ask my aunt," she had said; and well she knew the reception this poverty-stricken youngster would receive at the hands of that cold lady who knew genealogy as she knew her prayers, and

## THE GREAT GIFT

had at the same time a calculating, shrewd eye as to the suitor's money. That had been the end of the curate. And Hester was not sorry. He looked so much like a rabbit!

The second had been from a captain going to Cuba when the *Maine* went down. He had thrown his arms about her and tried to kiss her.

"I'm off to-morrow, Hester," he had said. "Darling! Darling!"

But she had recoiled from the touch of his arms as from a blow. The thing had come as such a shock to her well-ordered existence, an existence of bows and compliments and courtly words, of distance between man and woman, that it had covered her with confusion and fear. She had rushed away, red and trembling, and she had never consented to see him again.

Her aunt had died before the third offer came and Hester was installed as keeper and executor of the Adams house and lands; of the ships that went to China for tea and silk and that brought pulsing machinery to the cornfields of the Argentine. And somehow in her blood the shrewd mercantile Adams spirit felt the call of commerce as the Nichols family might have heard the call of the sword. Shrewdly she judged and solved problems and listened to the accountings of the stewardship of managers and clerks in the counting-house and shipping office.

## THE GREAT GIFT

It was from old Elias Quincy that the third offer came, a man who had buried three wives, white-bearded, grim of manner, terrible of religion. He had stumped up to her, leaning heavily on his crab-tree stick.

"You are too sensible," he had told her, "to want romance and silly stories. You are a good business woman, too. I think we could get on together."

Never had she shown herself so much of a lady. She smiled and inclined her head.

"I wish I could accept the honour," she had told him; "but I can't. There are reasons."

"Some young jackanapès?" Quincy had asked rudely.

"There is no one," she told him.

"Well, the ways of women are past me," the old man had said, and he went off.

I think that that incident, more than anything else, made her shrink into herself as far as her heart was concerned. Her mouth contracted a shade of bitterness, her eyes grew sombre, her manner even more aloof. To any man she might appear cold, indifferent, disdainful, self-centred, as impregnable in her frigid virginity as Diana the huntress. Of the men who had made love to her one had been a cold and trivial person; a second had frightened her by impetuosity—only too late did she realize what it had cost her to be a lady; and the third had been a calculating



## THE GREAT GIFT

old man, who judged her to be as calculating and shrewd as himself.

That had been all. And now as she looked back over the barren stretch of life that had been hers, she was surprised to find with what intensity she remembered these incidents. Except for these, existence had been merely an imprisonment in her Salem garden, watching the violets bloom in spring and the hollyhocks rise tall and graceful in summer-time and the cosmos in the autumn; an existence of seeing the singing birds grow tired and songless in their cages, and kittens becoming sleek and lazy cats and dying of old age, and of hearing snuff-coloured men talk of journal and ledger, of accounts due and payable, of notes and cash in hand.

So much for the mere physical portion of life. But there had been another side for her, a shadow-land of dreams in which she had lived continually for the last thirty years, a land of fairy princes and Beauties of the Sleeping Wood; of patient Griseldas; of knights slaying dragons. And continually she thought as she sat back in her chair and hemmed napkins or knitted, of great love stories of ancient days—of Héloïse and the Canon Peter Abelard, of Charlemagne and Bertha the Slender-Footed, of Lancelot and Guinevere. With one of those men only could she have been happy; a great, a chival-

## THE GREAT GIFT

rous nobleman, a Gramont or a Condé. With any one of these could she imagine herself passing along a cathedral to the tone of sounding music to be pledged and blessed by a great churchman in canonicals.

And it was not merely the idea of happiness and glamour that attracted her. For a great man such as one of these, she knew she could suffer agony. She felt as she sat there with her old silver and old furniture, her prim garden and her songless bird, that all about her, outside, life was effervescing like a strong wine. Men were doing things and women were helping them. And together men and women were facing tragedies greater than death, and triumphing over them. About her right in the hearts and bodies of people were forces acting and reacting, powerful as winged winds or boiling surf or the crash and flare of lightning. Pain, too—and that she wanted as well as happiness—the pain of misunderstanding, the pain of uncertainty, the pain of childbirth. Life was what she wanted, bouquet and body and lees. And right in the midst of it, life was passing her by.

Her dreams, she knew, were only shadows, vain formulæ, empty words. She had never in her life read of or known or felt anyone who could fit her ideal. If she had, she might have known a tragic and disappointing love; and even that would have

## THE GREAT GIFT

been better than nothing. She had never conceived of a man for herself, never, until——

She took up the paper and looked again at the picture of the czarist rebel, and thrilled as she met the dark, melancholy eyes, and blanched again at that terrible and careless sentence that ended the newspaper account: "It is practically certain that he will be executed."

After four days the trial came, and in those four days, so much had she thought about it, she seemed to know his every particular gesture, every particular feature and every inflection of his voice. And as she dreamed, the brown, melancholy eyes would sparkle and the cold features animate and she could imagine him speaking to her with warmth and great chivalry. His hands intrigued her, those slim and muscular brown fingers holding open the page of a book, and she blushed as she imagined her hand in them and the moon rising over her garden.

"Lyoff!" she would say to herself softly and fearfully when alone. "Lyoff! Lyoff!"

She read, as the trial went on and he faced the squat judge in the stuffy court-room with terrible dignity, of the rebel's famous ancestry: Peter, emperor of all the Russias, who led his land from barbarism to civilization, was founder of it, and it embraced Tartar women and strange Cossack warriors, and Khans from the rococo lands north of

## THE GREAT GIFT

India—a great family, large in the annals of the world; as great as she had ever dreamed when thinking of chivalrous lovers and high names.

And the Grand Duke Lyoff himself had had a wonderful career, nearly as wonderful as any of those; with his military governorship of Siberia, his administration of Manchu territory before the war with Japan, he had done more in his time than any other man to bring forward Russia's military glories. And when Russia had risen against its blood-stained Czars, the Grand Duke Lyoff had held the palace against troops and peasantry until his last shot was gone. Then he escaped to France.

"The end of Russia!" he had said tragically at Kronstadt. Then he had thrown back his head superbly, proudly. "Not yet. For I shall return. And I shall return with a drawn sword."

And he had returned, and was already fomenting revolution when the Soviet police had taken him.

"Kings are no longer God's regents," he had laughed, "since Heaven itself fights against me."

A great pang went through her as she thought of this knight errant in the dock in that meagre court-room with its atmosphere of hatred, a tall figure surrounded by a score of frail soldiery, unkempt, contemptuous; the audience crying for his blood; the biased judge playing with him as a vulture might venture to pluck at a crippled lion. She

## THE GREAT GIFT

could almost hear the deep baritone of his voice as he defended himself, and she thrilled to it as to the exalted tone of an organ.

She tried once or twice to shake off her oppression, knowing that it was gaining headway on her, and reasoning with herself that this man was nothing to her—a strange figure, in an alien country, of whose existence even she had not been aware until five days before. What was he to her? she asked herself. She might have answered that he was nothing. But somehow deep in the heart of her she felt that of all men in the world she would have given him the passion of love had she ever met him.

“My man!” she breathed in ecstatic wonder, and her whole being shook as though she had touched a life-current of the world.

She pictured him going from the bleak court-room back to his cell between files of soldiers, and her heart bled when she thought what it must be like—a dark and clammy place, with a board for a bed and an armful of coarse straw for a pillow.

“His dear, dear head!” she nearly sobbed to herself, and her eyes filled with tears so that she could not see.

But quietly she went about the house while this was on her, tending her garden, visiting a few ill old ladies to whom she read aloud editorials from

## THE GREAT GIFT

newspapers; and there were rounds of visits to make to poor people. She met her business managers and discussed affairs with them as keenly as ever. Old Mackenzie, from the shipping office, she rebuked firmly for an oversight.

"She a woman!" snorted the old clerk contemptuously, as he walked away. "There's nothing in her but a stone for a heart. Nothing for her but business, business! All the time! And tend to her fool garden. No wonder she couldn't get a man—not that she'd ever want one!"

As he went off she sat in her own room covering her eyes with her handkerchief and giving way to little tearing sobs. The execution was practically a certainty; even she had lost hope. Only that day, according to her newspaper, he had thrown back the offer of freedom to the judge like a paltry trinket.

"If I help in the administration of military affairs, I can go free!" he taunted them. "Did I come here, do you think, to chaffer for money or position? I came here to succeed or die. I have failed. I shall be free the moment you kill me."

A sort of strength would come to her in the daytime, when she knew he was standing in the dock, facing accusers boldly, making history. And when people spoke of it, as a few did in the course of the week, commenting on the trial, she felt an inward glow of warmth, as though she were har-



## THE GREAT GIFT

bouring some wonderful secret. She might have been a young girl, secretly affianced, and they speaking of her intended. Once or twice she blushed, but always she gained her composure immediately and spoke of it primly in her cold, modulated tones.

In the daytime, too, before he had made that savage, sarcastic retort to the judge there had arisen within her a wild hope that he might be set free. If that were so—and her breath stopped at the daring of the thought—she would go across to Russia and live there, or wherever he was, catching an occasional glimpse of him; speaking to him, perhaps, if introduced. That would suffice. That, even now, would fill her life.

“But not even that,” she told herself bitterly, once she read that savage answer.

She looked at herself in the tall mirror upon the wall, searchingly, as she had never looked before. And she went over her appearance, feature by feature and line by line. She looked at her low and broad brow; the fine nose; the long, well-marked eyebrows; the dark eyes. Her mass of brown hair, already shot through with grey, suggested somehow the tawny colouring of autumn. It was drawn back too severely, she knew. And with a delicate sense of confusion she unloosed it and coiled it about her head. The change startled her; it softened her face so. Those harsh lines about her mouth and the

80

## THE GREAT GIFT

coldness of the eyes and the rigid, proud head, they were irrevocable. And examining herself now, she could understand why men should fear to approach her. She was too cold, too aloof.

"And inside of me," she thought pathetically, "my heart's burning."

Frost! It occurred to her immediately, that was what she suggested, and she thought with a great wave of pain that she looked so because there had been no warmth of love in her life. She thought of a field that had grown hard with the cold and overlaid with snow, and that would burst its bonds with the summer sun and become filled with the wholesome green of grass, and the white and gold of daisies, and delicate clover. But there had been no one in her life to warm her, no one to keep the harsh lines from her mouth and the coldness from her eyes.

She crept into bed and she whimpered a little, like a frightened child, she felt so desolate. If he only knew, she thought, the chivalric heart of him would go out to her in pity, even if never in love. And suddenly in the midst of her sobbing, for she had rested little of late, she fell asleep.

She rose early in the morning and went down to the breakfast table as sedate and calm as ever. The September sun had broken into the room impetuously, and glistened on the furniture and silver. She took up the newspaper and sat down.

## THE GREAT GIFT

"The Grand Duke Lyoff will be executed for treason some time to-day," she read.

She dropped the paper in a daze. The maid came in.

"Miss Hester," the maid cried, "what's wrong? Are you ill? You're white. Your teeth are chattering."

"I'm only cold," she answered. "Cold. Bitter cold."

The little pastor of the Revere Square church, a florid, jolly man, with a taste for full-sounding texts and a full-bodied dinner, sat across the dinner table from his sharp-faced, austere wife. At the foot of it was Rose Pringle, coy still at thirty-five, whose hobby was settlement work and who derived her fortune from sweated labour in New Bedford. John Davies, an amateur pianist with money, a nervous elderly man, was beside her. At the head of the table was Hester, pale, collected. Beneath the board, now and then, her fingers plucked at the cloth.

"A neurotic country," the pastor was saying. "We leave good roast for curry; honest Christianity for Swamism; Bahaism; religions highly spiced and utterly indigestible——"

"You're irreverent, Herbert," his wife rebuked . . .

Hester, eating mechanically, eating with a dogged, terrible determination, heard the voices only as the inconsequential droning of flies. Occasionally some-

## THE GREAT GIFT

one laughed, a hideous, foolish sound, like the outcry of some cacophonous bird. When she was spoken to, she answered mechanically and slowly. A bitter and striking analogy had come into her mind. In a later edition of her newspaper she had read that Lyoff would not be executed until shortly before midnight. There were papers to be signed, formalities to be gone through, that would hold up action until then. Because to-morrow was Sunday, they would not shoot him at sunrise, and they were so thirsty for blood they could not wait until Monday. She thought with a shiver of the mob in Jerusalem who had hastened His crucifixion that they might not soil their hands with blood on their Sabbath day. . . .

"I think it's the Swamis' air of mystery that gains people," Miss Pringle was saying. "Don't you, Hester?"

"To a great extent," she answered.

How had she gone through the day, she wondered, the dull, grey day. She had little memory of it. Her feet had carried her subconsciously to her accustomed tasks and it was only at three o'clock that she remembered she was giving dinner that night to Father Myers and his wife and a few friends. The prospect had appalled her. What should she do? And then the answer came to her. She would do as he would have wished her. If she had been his

## THE GREAT GIFT

wife, she would have gone through with everything heroically, as though nothing were happening, concealing her feelings proudly, haughtily, like a great lady. He would have been proud of her for that. The action of a woman worthy of him!

"Oriental religion has no place in an Occidental world," Davies remarked sententiously.

"That's the gist of the matter," the parson began. The pastor's sentences seemed to drip on her raw brain like rain on eaves. She had to listen and it appeared to her like a man fighting with maimed and tortured hands. The maid spoke to her behind her chair but she could not grasp it. Through her head ran a series of little pictures like a reel on a child's biograph. Now they were taking him out of his cell, a trim officer with a file of slatternly soldiers. Lanterns glimmered in the dark and a torch sputtered. They were reading something from a paper. He was listening contemptuously. They hurried through the reading to finish before midnight. Midnight in Russia, she figured, nine o'clock here. The officer gave a command. The men fell in.

"There's a great deal to Buddhism," Miss Pringle ventured.

"Now, I'm not a bigot," Father Myers smiled, "but . . ."

The feet of the soldiers tramped across the cobbled stones with a jarring rhythm. Between the files the

## THE GREAT GIFT

revolutionary walked easily as though sauntering. He fingered his beard with his lean brown fingers. Dim electric lights glimmered faintly over the courtyard. They came to an empty trough in the ground. He took his stand on the edge. The soldiers unslung their rifles. . . .

"Mohammedanism is a code of ethics, not a religion," Davies remarked.

"How can you, Mr. Davies?" Miss Pringle pouted. . . .

A soldier stepped forward with a bandage and the man on the edge of the grave waved him off. The soldiers fell back. The file raised their rifles.

A faint metallic sound wave struck the room, a church bell on the first stroke of the hour.

"Bless my soul!" the pastor said. "It's nine o'clock!"

She felt suddenly as if she had received an appalling blow beneath the heart. It stopped her consciousness for an instant. She felt as though she were hovering on the edge of something and the world was swinging through space like a pendulum. A great and illimitable darkness swirled about her, like a tempestuous sea, and it struck her, for an instant, that this was death. . . .

"You are looking pale, Hester," the Pringle girl said. "Are you feeling ill?"



## THE GREAT GIFT

"No, I'm all right," she answered. It was as if she were above her body, listening, as another person might, to the sounds issuing from her corporeal throat.

Little by little, surprisingly, came to her the familiar surroundings, the faint susurrus of conversation, the subdued movement of knife and fork. Questions were asked her and she answered them. She even ate mechanically.

But inside of her, her brain was racing and her heart throbbed high. So he was dead! So it was all over! So he was dead! And again in her mind there dawned that intuitive knowledge of the way she should act in this shadow drama in which she had been given a rôle—the high, imperious rôle of a consort in a princely house; she must act as though she were this man's acknowledged wife, with calm, impassive dignity, without a quiver of eyelash or a sigh from the heart, as those ladies of an old régime remained impassive and calm in the turmoils of a revolution. Later, in the dark quiet of her room, tears might burst forth, and low, poignant sobs shake her every fibre. Later! Later, but not now!

And then it exploded in her brain, suddenly, wonderfully, that through the curtain of this tragedy, a great gift had come to her—that through it she had known a thing that many waters could not drown nor floods quench, that she would have a gift and a memory until her dying day, a little sweet secret

## THE GREAT GIFT

that even already was warming the chilled heart, and hacking fetters from a manacled spirit.

“Look!” The Pringle woman turned to the pastor and whispered. “Look at Hester. She seems like a queen.”

The pastor threw his glance up and whispered too, more to himself than to Miss Pringle.

“Queer!” he puzzled. “Very queer. She looks to me like a bride.”

### III

## THE GRYPHON

About gold, I have heard this: There is a great store of it in India, beyond the Ganges, which is guarded by a gryphon; and the one-eyed people from over the water attempt to steal it from the gryphon, who defends it.—  
DIODORUS SICULUS, *The Historian*.

### I

ONE would have thought, as she leaned back in her chair and, turning away from her son and his intended, looked across the lawn, that there were tears in her eyes. There probably were. The Countess of Oriel could always fit her voice and looks to every occasion. And this was an occasion on which a certain mistiness of the eye was required. A mother should show some sign of pathetic sorrow when she meets the woman who is to absorb the life of her son. So the Countess of Oriel was patricianly affected.

"It is hard to let Ulick go," she smiled across at the girl; "but it's not so hard as it might be, because I know in whose hands he is."

The girl murmured something embarrassedly, and the son fidgeted with his watch chain. The countess, for all her pathetic smile, was studying the

## THE GRYPHON

girl with an eye that searched like a surgeon's probe. Little to her, the countess decided. Her face was pretty enough, in a sweet way, with that dim mass of black hair and the startled black eyes. The mouth was sweet. A slight and delicately moulded chin showed no great force of character. A sweet and pretty girl, and that was all. The sort of girl, she laughed to herself inwardly, that she had expected Ulick to like, and the sort of girl, she laughed again, that would think Ulick, for all his weakness, a king among men. She had been afraid that Ulick would have chosen some strapping Amazon, with a will of chilled steel, whom it would have been difficult to manage.

But this girl would do.

"You are both so young," she sighed.

She looked at her twenty-two-year-old boy, clean-cut, slim, handsome, too, with his fair round features and blue, smiling eyes. He had his father's indeterminate chin, though, and the same look of good-natured kindness about the mouth and eyes. That she didn't care for. There wasn't enough hardness about him, enough savage determination to conquer.

"But if you are going to be married, well, you're going to, and I won't object. I don't know that marrying as young as possible isn't the best thing in the long run. You will take care of him, won't you, my dear?"

The girl nodded; she was still too embarrassed

## THE GRYPHON

to speak. The countess smiled. Another good sign. The girl was conscious that she was only daughter of an ex-tenant of the estate—of farmer stock, who by some miracle had made millions in America—and that she was nothing compared to the Countess of Oriel, even though in a few months the Countess would be dowager and the ex-tenant's daughter would bear the title and dignity. Again the son fidgeted with his watch chain.

Across the lawn in the little wood, through the silence of the May afternoon, they could hear the gentle noises of the birds and the whinnying laughter of squirrels. From the river running past them a trout rose in the air for a fly, and was poised there for a moment in an iridescent glimmer. From the gatekeeper's lodge a line of smoke rose high in the air, in a straight blue column, so little did the wind move. To the right of them, two miles away, Slievegullion's brown bulk loomed up in a sort of golden haze. Beneath them, in the valley that rolled seaward, the great fertile acres of orchard land showed like a stunted forest. From the town to the left there came faintly not the sound but the sense of the big linen mills, busy with flying shuttle and purring loom. Here and there, above the intervening trees, could be seen glances of the vast chimneys, reaching skyward like titanic lances.

"I am not going to speak another word to you," the countess said. "You're dying to run off. Run

## THE GRYPHON

away now, and be together as much as you want to."

The girl thought as she went off with the boy that her future mother was the most wonderful woman she had ever seen. It seemed to her that she had been in the presence of some kindly but mighty pontiff.

The Countess leaned back and closed her eyes. A twenty-five-year-old tension had snapped, and now that the quarry which she had pursued for a quarter of a century was within her grasp the weariness of the chase was telling on her. A fine woman, one would have called her, as he saw her reclining there, for all her fifty years. She was supple and lithe of body yet. Her eyes were bright and piercing. The only signs of age about her were the heavy lines of determination about mouth and eyes, and the hair that was silvering, and that was, even when silvering, more attractive than when it had been sloe-black. Not a pretty woman, by any means, what with her over-long patrician face and the beaked Churchill nose. Not even good-looking. Handsome in a powerful way. But her looks were the least thing about her.

A man would never have loved her for her countenance, or would never have been repelled by it. He would have been attracted or repelled, or crushed, by the spirit that blazed through it.

"The most dangerous woman in Europe," Edward the Seventh had called her, "if she only had the weapons to be dangerous with."



## THE GRYPHON

She watched her son and the girl disappearing fast into the copse, the pair of tweed-clad figures drawing closer together the farther they drew away from the house. The thought of what they were feeling for each other evoked in her mind the memory of her own courtship and marriage. She had been twenty-five when it happened, and one of the three daughters of Canon Churchill of Armagh Cathedral. The canon was the youngest brother of a cadet line of the Marlboroughs, and was glad to get the living. A gentle, ineffectual man, in whom the strain of the victor of Blenheim had weakened to the proportions of water. He was not much interested in the cure of souls, and much less in ecclesiastical advancement. He spent his days in appreciating an excellent old port and in preparing an edition of Propertius. There were his three daughters, of course, Marjory, Jane and Anne. The eldest two caused him no bother, being as ineffectual as himself. But the thought of Anne occasionally spoiled his palate for the port and disturbed the cadence of the stately Latin verses.

"I cannot understand that girl," he would confess to himself. "A very unrestful personality." He shrugged his shoulders. "But I suppose one must have a cross of some kind."

But the cross was soon removed from his shoulders by bell, book and candle. Anne married. She was married with fitting ceremony to Ulick Fitzhugh

## THE GRYPHON

Fitzjohn, Earl of Oriel. Others had asked her to marry them, young clerics of the diocese, who held out to her modestly the possibility of being one day wife of an archbishop, and mighty in the land; hunting squires, hard-drinking, hard-swearing, hard-riding; penniless subalterns of the barracks. All these she refused.

"I have never even thought of marriage," she lied prettily.

I think there must have blazed up in her, for the last time maybe, that ambitious Marlborough spark—the spark that had made a great soldier and a national hero out of a pettifogging and ill-born wastrel. All her life, from the age of three, she had wanted power. At fifteen, in some mouldy handbook of heraldry, she read the arrogant motto of the Rohans—*Roi ne puis ; duc ne daigne ; Rohan suis*—"a king I cannot be; a duke I do not condescend to be; I am a Rohan." That phrase made her ambition concrete. She wanted to have as much power, as much dignity, as much respect as any person in the kingdom; to have her hand in the intrigues of dynasties, in the rise and fall of great officials, in the settling of public polity.

There came along Ulick Fitzhugh Fitzjohn, Earl of Oriel, a man her own age; a man known on every hunting field in Ireland; respected by his tenantry; laughed kindly at by public officials for his manifest lack of ability in politics, when he allowed himself to be drawn into politics at all. A very kindly and

## THE GRYPHON

gentle man, a gallant sportsman, but with no more understanding of great world forces and national affairs than a marionette, and in addition to that, of an astonishing meagreness of purpose.

He made love to her, attracted by her strength and electric personality, as an easy-going and somewhat weak character would be. She accepted him. With his position as a peer of the realm and with her ambition and strength, she calculated she could rise far. The lack of money didn't matter just yet—there was so little that he could only settle on her a jointure of three hundred pounds a year. The money would come later, she decided. There must be always a way where the will is so strong.

He was very proud of his bride and very enthusiastic.

"Listen, Anne," he told her: "I'm going to get you the finest little hunting cob in all Ireland. I'm going to start in looking for it to-day. And another thing: I want to get a coach and four, and teach you to drive it. I'll raise the wind somewhere——"

"But I want to go to London," she protested.

"Oh, very well," he gave in listlessly.

There was something very definite in her mind. She knew that of all the Irish peers Oriel stood highest with the old queen. Somehow the very conservative and careworn and lonely lady had been impressed by the easy-going and reckless sportsman. She had asked him some questions about Ireland,

## THE GRYPHON

and he had told her the truth, and though the truth was little to her liking, she appreciated his fearlessness.

The Countess of Oriel decided that something might be made out of this. There were fat governorships to be given away. With the pulling of a wire here and another there Oriel would be certain of an appointment. They might send him back to Ireland as viceroy. Less competent men than even he had been thrust on India. There was New Zealand. There was the Cape. From any of these a man might come back an authority on colonial government and, rising up among his peers, become oracular. Something like that, and the career would be commenced.

He received his appointment. A commission from the queen gave him greeting and the governorship of the Bermudas. The queen had recognised him as honest, but she was shrewd enough to recognise him as lacking in ability, and she was too conscientious to allow any incapable man to make ducks and drakes of a colony. She put him where he could do least harm or no harm at all. Anne was furious.

She accompanied him out there, and for two years she stayed with him. They had been four years married when their son was born. She recognised there was nothing to be done with her husband, so she decided to go home.

"I am returning to England," she announced.

"Why?" he asked foolishly.

## THE GRYPHON

"Why?" she sneered back. "Oh, just because I abominate lilies and loathe onions, and the *opéra bouffe* seascape bores me to death."

She went off, and I rather believe he was glad to see her go. She must have been a terrible woman to live with. The going of the boy cut him dreadfully. He might have resigned and gone home, too, but he was the sort of man who stuck to a post when he was placed there. He died a year after she went back; of malaria, it is officially recorded. The facts are different. Homesickness broke his spirit—the loneliness for the dashing hunting meets of Oriel, for the trout rising to the cast of the fly, for the whirling of a dogcart over the black Irish roads. He was keenly sensitive to the disgrace of his wife's leaving him. And after she left he drank rather heavily—which is a word to the wise. At any rate, after that his body went to pieces and his spirit was not interested enough to hold it together, but deserted it and winged its way back to its beloved homeland.

So Ulick Fitzhugh Fitzjohn, eighth Earl of Oriel, died, and Ulick Fitzhugh Fitzjohn, ninth of that line, and little over a year old, reigned in his stead. For twenty-two years the Countess of Oriel managed the estate and nursed her ambition; and her ambition instead of growing weary and dying, became more strong and muscular every day. She still saw herself for twenty years yet playing with destiny, powerful

## THE GRYPHON

as a prime minister, and respected and known as much as a princess royal. Other women of her class were exercising that power. At their week-end parties, ministers formed Cabinets, and members of Parliament were elected before their constituents saw them. The old issue of Home Rule had risen again, and a greater game than ever was in progress, that of suborning the army. Women of title were playing with civil war as a juggler tosses a ball. And she, the most capable and the most ambitious of them all, was not in it.

"In a little while, though," she told herself with a smile, as she lay back in her chair and watched her son and his sweetheart come along the riverside toward the house. "In a very little while."

For years now—for twenty-two years, to be exact—she had been planning a marriage like this for her son, a marriage of his title with millions of money. She had the position and she had the brains, and shortly now the money would be hers too. It would be Ulick's, of course, but Ulick would use it in any way she wanted. She had brought him up so as to fall in with any wish she would state. There had been one danger all along, though: that the girl with money whom Ulick would marry might be strong and antagonistic enough to keep it.

But luck was running her way, after the barren hands of twenty years and more.

Without any intrigue on her part, without any



## THE GRYPHON

planning, Ulick and this most eligible of candidates had fallen in love, without her knowing a thing of it.

The pair crossed the lawn toward the terrace, and she saw the girl's face transfigured by happiness and trust as by a halo. Yes, she nodded again, the girl would do.

### II

At what age he had begun to fear his mother he could never decide, but he knew that, as far back as he could remember, no action of his had been taken, no thought formulated, no word spoken, except under the shadow of that dark and terrible personality.

She seemed to have formed in her own mind a type of person whom the Earl of Oriel should be, and to that type she made him rigidly adhere, crushing in him, as far as she could, every natural instinct of his own people. He could remember, when he was seven years old, riding along the country roads on his little Shetland pony, and his mother beside him on her black cob. He looked so gallant there, with his erect seat, with his flaxen hair and his merry blue eyes, that the hearts of the country people jumped within them. They had known his father so well, strong farmer and drover, fiddler and beggar too. They wanted him to stop and talk to them.

"Threescore and fifteen years old I am," old

## THE GRYPHON

Miles McGuigan, the piper, stopped him; "three-score and fifteen. I mind your grandfather, boy, and I mind your father too. With my own eyes I've seen him, the age that you are, riding on his pony along the selfsame road. Ay, and there was the same white hair on him, and the same look in his face. And when I saw you coming along the road, I said to myself it must be near the grave I'm getting, and I seeing the ghosts of them that were!"

He wanted to stop and talk to McGuigan, but his mother smiled a quick and gracious smile, and a very aloof one, and he had to content himself with an embarrassed word. They cantered off.

"Nine black curses on you," the piper swore after her; "nine black and ancient curses, and may each of them blast you, body and soul! The ruin and death of one good man you were, and you're planning to be the ruin and death of another!"

He loved the places his father had loved—old Benburb House, half Norman castle and half Queen Anne cottage, with the little river flowing beside it, teeming with trout; the bulk of Slievegullion Mountain behind, blue and hazy, heather-clad and tunnelled, with its enchanted lake on the summit, and with always a pheasant whirring high into the air from the bracken, or a badger slinking between the rocks; the scent of the orchard lands in May—the sweet odour of the apple blossoms and of the miles of hawthorn hedges, and the wind bringing down

## THE GRYPHON

the smell of the mountain heather. And in winter, too, he loved the glistening roads with the healthy frost on them, with the white moon overhead seeming only an aperture through which light came, and no sound at all but the barking of a dog on the trail of a rabbit or the booming of a distant loon.

But even as much as he loved this, he was glad to get away from it, in order to escape from his mother. It was with a feeling of being released from jail that he faced the bleak prospect of Harrow. There at least she would not be always after him, making regulations of conduct under the guise of suggestions, or choosing his friends. She had a knack of making remarks that cut like a knife. Once she found him boxing in the stables with one of the stable boys, a once famous lightweight.

"Occasionally, very occasionally," she purred, "I wish you would have five minutes' conversation with decent people. It will help you when you take your seat in the Lords. The manners of stable boys and prize fighters would be rather out of place there. Do, please, Ulick!"

More often her manner was sharp, like the crack of a whip on his flanks. He strolled one day through the house, forgetting her presence, singing a country ballad:

*"And when Mother Death with her cool arms shall  
embrace me,*

## THE GRYPHON

*And lull me to sleep with sweet 'Erin go bragh,'  
By the side of my Kathleen, my young wife, oh,  
place me ;  
And forget Phelim Brady, the Bard of Armagh."*

"Ulick!" she snapped at him. Her eyes were blazing. That was all!

Even at Harrow she gave him little respite. She never allowed him to be long without a visit from her.

"It was quite a struggle to send you here," she told him. She hinted rather than told of privations. "You have no idea how hard a struggle it has been. Your father's affairs were in a scandalous condition when he died. It will be harder still to send you to Trinity."

In London and Dublin she had a coterie of friends who had been impressed by her strength of will into seeing things from her standpoint. They would look at the boy reproachfully.

"You must be good to your mother when you grow up, Ulick," they told him. "She has gone through a great deal for your sake."

At home during the holidays his mother would put it more strongly.

"I don't like to speak of it, Ulick, but I have had a very unhappy life. Your father was not everything he should have been to me. I had to leave him—it was too terrible!" She would sigh and pause. "I

## THE GRYPHON

could have married again, a score of times, but I wanted to care for you myself." Then she would add another shackle to the bonds of discipline and duty. She would appeal to his sense of chivalry. "I am a very lonely old woman, Ulick, and I have only you. You mustn't desert me ever."

"Of course——" he would mumble embarrassedly.  
"Of course——"

But this story of hers hardly accorded with the legends of his father that were told on the countryside. Small things, it is true, but which fired the lad's imagination. He heard how the dead earl had once fought a carter on the road who was ill-using his horse, giving away forty pounds' weight and knocking the man unconscious after fifteen minutes' gruelling fight. He heard also the story of how his father, returning from the hunt, had found an old beggar woman sitting on a ditch, her feet cut and blistered. She wanted to get to Scarva, she said, three miles away. He jumped from the horse, put her in the saddle, and walked at the mount's head until he brought her home.

"And him a belted earl!" the countryside murmured in awe.

At Trinity, too, he heard things which disquieted him more than ever. Mahaffy greeted him with a pathetic smile.

"I taught your father Greek," he said with that grand manner and faint lisp of his. "A great sports-

## THE GRYPHON

man and a gallant gentleman. A poor scholar, I am afraid, but it is one of the most kindly memories of my old days."

Cooper, too—old Sir Bryan Cooper, him with the reddest of faces and the whitest bristling moustache—slapped Oriel on the back in Grafton Street.

"Damn me," he swore, "if you're not the living image of your dad! If you're half as good a man, though, you'll do. Damn me, you'll do! There was a man for you! If it hadn't been for that damned Bermuda——"

A question had long been shaping in Oriel's brain. He asked it:

"Sir Bryan, what possessed father to go to Bermuda? He could have been so happy at home."

"Ask your mother, my lad," the old baronet replied; and that was all that could be got out of him.

In the Kildare Street Club another disquieting thing had happened. He had been sitting in the reading-room when Dowson, a young barrister and member of Parliament, came in talking to Moriarty, the Solicitor-General.

"If that woman ever got her hands on any money," Dowson was saying, "she'd tear the country to pieces. She's got her knife into Carson, and she hates the Devlin bunch just as badly. She'd found a new party, man alive——"

Some occult flash of inspiration told the boy that



## THE GRYPHON

his mother was being spoken of. An instant later he was sure. Moriarty caught sight of him.

"Shut up, you ass!" he warned Dowson.

All this fitted into a fine parquetry of event, a mosaic of conviction that put him on his guard. He distrusted her as much as he feared her. His father! His teeth clenched at the light she had put the dead man in. He felt an overwhelming desire to go and accuse her to her face of the vague things he knew. A few weeks later he decided he would. On his twenty-first birthday the estate was turned over to him. The grey family solicitor made no secret of how affairs had been administered. The boy was told there had been no need for skimping. His income, though modest, with his mother's jointure, had been sufficient for their needs. Legacies left him by relatives—the rich Close farm, for instance, from his godfather, and some house property in Belfast—had been sold by her and turned to her own ends. The dead earl, careless always, had given her some blanket power in his will, and she had used it shamelessly. The young earl might have let that go, but other matters roused his fury—the peddling of the shooting on Slievegullion as though it were a huckster's stock in trade; the sale of family portraits, painted in periods of affluence by famous artists. Heartless, sordid business that, he felt, would make the line of honourable dead hot with shame in their graves!

## THE GRYPHON

"What did my mother do with this money?" he asked the solicitor.

"Your mother was very much interested in a couple of elections, and doubtless, in the excitement of the contests——"

That was enough! He would hear no more!

With his face flaming he strode out of the offices and galloped madly home. He sprang through the door and into the drawing-room, his hands clenched, his eyes bloodshot.

"Mother!" he called.

She came toward him, on guard as always. Her step betrayed no excitement. Her calm, firm eye was like the glisten of a gun barrel.

"Yes, Ulick," she said. "What is it?"

But the one and twenty years of fear and discipline had done their work. The mere sight of her, the calm but compelling gaze, the firm lines about the mouth, the eternal poise, the frigid voice—all conquered him. The fury died in him and the anger wavered and a sense of terror turned his resolution to water.

"It's nothing," he blundered in answer, and he rushed from the room, livid, shaking, nauseated with his own cowardice.

### III

Great were the occasions—and few they were, perhaps three in the year—when he could contrive

## THE GRYPHON

to be alone at Benburb House for a month. At those times his mother would be visiting in France, perhaps, or in London, and there were things on the small estate to be attended to, beyond the rigid jurisdiction of agent and lawyer, and to him the management of these would fall. Then for a glorious month he enjoyed himself, hunting in the winter, or fishing in summer, or simply riding about the roads. On these occasions, too, the old ideal that the countryside had of the Oriel earl was realised. He joked with the people, talked with them, danced with them, as his father had done before him, and his grandfather too. He went to fair and wedding and festival. It was on an occasion such as this that he met Neysa Darcy.

It was on a quiet April afternoon in Newcastle. March had just passed and there was still the tang of cold in the air, but the leaves had budded and there were faint sprays of white on the hawthorn bushes. He had come over in the dogcart, and was wandering on foot through the sunlit streets of the sleepy old town, when he met Palmer, rector of Ballinard, a bluff old Trinity man, whose sermons had the soporific effect of opium, but whose reminiscences of the hunting field sparkled like a heady wine. With him was a young woman.

Oriel will describe to you what Neysa Darcy was like the day he met her in Newcastle town, and his description will be an appalling failure. One gets

## THE GRYPHON

the impression from his words that he was a victim of the most terrible earthquake that ever befell humanity, and that amid the ruins of the crumbling universe he beheld a vision more sublime, more beautiful, more majestic than Minerva, in shining panoply, springing from the head of Jove. But if Oriel cannot describe her, I think I can: A small, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl, with cool, slim hands; a shy, blushing and timid girl, with a voice, low and clear and modulated, that has in it something of the quality of a golden bell. There is no feature in her face that one can seize and comment on, but what none can miss is that spirit of love and trust and loyalty of hers, that shines in her eyes, that shows in her mouth, that is suggested by every little gesture she makes. One could see from a first glance at her that she required someone to take care of her, someone to protect that freshness and illusion from all the world, and someone on whom she could lavish her trust and love. And still and all, one feels, for all her softness and fragility, that having found her someone, if disaster were to meet him she would follow him barefoot to the icy edge of the world.

Palmer, the rector, introduced them.

"A new neighbour of yours," he explained, "at least for a month. A daughter of an ex-tenant of your father's, and of an old friend of mine—William John Darcy, the fruit man. You know the name?"

Of course Oriel knew the name! It was a byword

## THE GRYPHON

for wealth in the countryside. Everybody knew the story of William John Darcy, of Derryogue, who had gone to America, a lad of thirteen, barely forty years ago, and who had now as many millions as he had had dollars when he entered the country. His vessels sped along the Caribbean waterways, laying Central America under tribute for fruit to feed the States.

"Yes," the rector was saying, "her father let her come over here for a month to see what the old place was like. She's staying with us, and has gone wild over it——"

"How are you going home?" he asked the rector.

"In the trap."

"Let my groom go home with the trap," Oriel stuttered. "I'll take you both home in the dogcart."

"Do let us go, Uncle Edwin," she pleaded. The rector was amused. He had noticed the winsome interest in her eyes as she looked at Oriel, and he had noticed the boy's open-mouthed astonishment as he looked at the rector's visitor.

They spoke hardly a word together as they whirled along the road homeward, but each of them was vibrant somehow with the other's presence. The four miles whipped by like as many yards. When they reached the rector's the girl's cheeks were flushed and her eyes sparkled.

"It isn't anything like a motor car, of course," Oriel said as he helped her down.

## THE GRYPHON

"It was splendid," she breathed, and her eyes shone as though there was a delicate suffused light behind them. Oriol turned to the rector.

"There was something I wanted to go over with you some of these days, sir," he said. "Nothing very important, but I think I'll drop over——"

"Nothing very important, eh?" the rector laughed. He looked at both of them, and unconsciously both of them blushed. "You can come over to dinner to-night, if you want to. And I think that's what you mean."

He rode the half mile to Benburb House in a state of exaltation. He astonished the household by breaking into loud and extremely doleful songs, so happy did he feel; and immediately after that would come a burst of silence, in which he would sit down and marvel at her, so much wonder and mystery did she seem to contain. He had met girls before, hundreds of them—the hard-riding, swearing, smoking gentlewomen of his own district, who knew the points of horse and dog as well as any man; the polished, sophisticated débutantes of Dublin and London; the honest, handsome country girls of Oriol. These he had known and spoken to, though never even the slightest flirtation had taken place. But this dark, sweet, magnetic little lady had caught him as in a swift noose. He was like a lover in *The Thousand and One Nights*, who, having glimpsed a woman for an instant only, falls ill and is like to die.



## THE GRYPHON

He went to the rector's to dinner that night, and his usually healthy appetite forsook him in the miracle of watching her eat. She had changed into an evening frock, and it occurred to him he had never seen anything so transcendently beautiful and gracious in his life. They spoke very little to each other, but by smiles and the light in their eyes it was evident how happy they were at being together.

"Good-night" they said reluctantly, and it seemed to both of them, as the words passed, that their minds and hearts were hammering out messages to each other that no words could have ever expressed.

He took her riding next morning, and a tremor shook him as he caught her foot in his hand and swung her into the saddle. He had the rector and the rector's wife and her to dinner at Benburb House, and pride dilated within him at the idea of her sitting beside him in that ancient, honourable home.

And so for three weeks they were inseparable. April merged gently into May, and the hawthorn trees turned white and fragrant, and swarms of birds sang in unison. The days lengthened, and from night to night a thin silver sickle of a moon changed imperceptibly to a round golden globe. And as the spring began to mature, with all the vague unrest of it, something began to blossom between them that they understood but could not speak of. There were long moments of happiness, long intervals of silence, little intimacies, marvellous discoveries, to

## THE GRYPHON

record which would be an intrusion and a shame, even were it possible for another to understand the gleaming iridescence of those moments.

There seemed to be a tacit conspiracy among all to let them be together. Not for her father's sake, not for her wealth, but because of herself the countryside loved her. They esteemed it no small honour for any woman to be courted, as they called it, by their young landlord. They knew too well, better than he suspected, how circumscribed his life was, how unhappy and unfree he had been under the domination of the Countess. They were glad to see him happy.

"A good thing it is for him, he to be in love with a woman," was their shrewd comment. "A kindly and warm thing. It washes the bitterness out of the heart like a brook of clear water."

"I don't know what her father would say," Palmer, the rector, told himself, "if he knew about it. Or his mother either, for the matter of that. And I don't think I care."

And so they roamed about the country together, as happy and as aloof from the life about them as two birds upon a branch or two salmon in a pool. And it was not only the May, nor themselves, but the country about them that exerted a sort of magic on their hearts. There is no place as barbarous and as magnificent and as rich in Ireland as the Valley of Oriel. Still in it great crimes are committed; great

## THE GRYPHON

love stories lived. A country redolent of apple blossoms and honey, with trout leaping in the rivers, and the trees alive with birds. A country into which all the legendry of Ireland is gathered, as a handful of emeralds may be gathered in the hollow of two palms. Near by is the ford which Cuchulainn of the Red Branch held against an army of a hundred thousand men, when Maeve of Connaught rode northward to harry the fertile Ulster plains. Within hearing is the sound of the sea on which the children of Lir floated for three hundred years, changed into white swans. Near by, too, is the rock on which Naoise dashed and ruined a beauty that was fairer than Helen of Troy's, and for which kings had gone mad. All these stories Oriel told her, and she listened, rapt, her eyes half closed, her lips dilated.

"Don't stop," she pleaded, and smilingly he would go on.

Palmer, the rector, smiled at the pair of them in his cynical, kindly way.

"You two," he commented, "remind me of the Babes in the Wood. The only thing lacking is an ogre."

In return she told him of her father, whom she adored, and a vague unrest arose in Oriel's heart as he listened to the epic of that dauntless soul riding to success over every obstacle. She told him of his early struggle in New York with a fruit cart—without embarrassment or shame she told that

## THE GRYPHON

which many another woman would have concealed. She told how the cart had been replaced by a store, how the store had been augmented by two others. As though she were describing a battle big as Crécy or Waterloo, she spoke of how a combination had risen against the little fruit dealers, and how her father had gone about to all of them—Greek and Italian, Irishman and German and Swede—and how they had all turned over their money to him, trusting honestly in his ability and honesty. He had chartered a boat to go to Jamaica on a regular schedule—the fleet of Jason in search of the Golden Fleece had no more of drama in it!—had plunged the accumulated funds on it, and had succeeded. That was the turning point. Now his own fleet ploughed the blue tropic waters, and people spoke of him breathlessly as the Fruit King.

“And dad! When you see dad! Ulick, he’s the most simple, kindly soul in the world. You’d never think he had made commercial history. Oh, there’s a real man!”

That worried Oriel not a little. In the night-time, when she had gone to bed, and he was wandering about the dewy grass beneath her window, in places they had been together that day, it would occur to him that he had no purpose like that of the fruit man, no big vision, no end in life. So shackled had he been in the arrangement of his days, of his thoughts, by the Countess, that he had never been

## THE GRYPHON

free to think in a wide and sweeping focus. Ancestors of his had done great things. Ulster had never been Ulster had it not been for the Fitzjohn who had held it for Strongbow. Another Oriel had given up life and fortune for the Stuarts on Culloden field. His grandfather had spent his days in ameliorating conditions among the tenantry of the North. His father might have done something worthy of national chronicle had he not been cut off in Bermuda before his prime. But he himself had never looked forward to anything but the winter's hunting, and the teeming trout brooks in summer, and the governing of the little estate. There must be something more, he felt, something big.

"A man—like her father!" he would mutter, uneasy, unseeing, unsatisfied.

And one more thing lay on his mind. They had never spoken of marriage. In some dim way it had been brought home to both of them that for the rest of their existences they would be together, and how, seemed a small detail. She, no doubt, took it for granted, and he too. But how? The shadow of his mother lay across his happiness heavily. What would she say? And what would he do were she to forbid it? He remembered groaningly how the life and anger had gone from him on the passionate occasion when he wanted to confront her with her false stewardship of the estate. What would she say to his marrying this

## THE GRYPHON

unknown girl, this daughter of an ex-tenant? The fear and the struggle showed in his face.

"You poor boy!" Neysa would say to him in the mornings. "You look haggard and worn."

They wandered up Slievegullion that morning. They passed the lake at the foot, and the old stone castle that King John had built, and lost themselves in the stretch of brown heather. Up and up they had gone, he encouraging her, until they reached the little plateau at the top with the lake in its middle. A light early summer breeze was out. It rustled among the heather, and at that height it appeared to be unearthly, so pure it was. From the summit of the peak they could see five counties—Antrim, dour and forbidding; Armagh, lush and prosperous; Down, with the mountains of Mourne blue in the distance; Louth, sweeping downward to the sea; Monaghan, stalwart stronghold of the Scotch-Irish. In the distance Lough Neagh glimmered like a fine pearl. They might have been on the tip of the world looking down at the nations, so far could they see.

She was very silent. All round her her glance roved. The wind rustled merrily. A little lapping came from the lake. The querulous note of plovers broke in on them, high like the chanter of a bagpipe, and against that was heard the deep booming of bitterns, like a bagpipe's drone. An eagle barked near by, like the bark of a dog. The wind blew a



## THE GRYPHON

cloud against them, and it broke white like surf. He laughed at the unearthliness of it all. But she screamed, like the note of a frightened bird.

"What is it?" he asked quickly. "For God's sake, Neysa!"

"I'm so scared!" she sobbed. "Up here, it's like being cut off from the world . . . I don't know . . . I feel alone . . ." She crept toward him, her face white, her hands outstretched. "Ulick! Ulick!"

"Don't mind, little sweetheart," he told. "I'll take care of you, now and always—now and always. . . ."

He broke in on his mother next morning at her rooms in the Cecil. He had come over that night to London on the Greenore boat. He burst in as she was writing a letter to O'Neill, member for South Armagh, suggesting his presence at the Boyne Anniversary celebration. Oriel did not even give the usual lukewarm kiss.

"I'm going to be married!" he blurted out.

"And to whom, may I ask?" She eyed him slantingly, her lips curved into an archaic smile. "To the sweetest girl in the world, I suppose."

"To Neysa Darcy," he answered, brought suddenly up short, "an American girl, daughter of an ex-tenant of ours."

"Yes?" she queried. "And what might the position of this ex-tenant of ours in America be? Policeman? Prize fighter? Barber? Waiter?"

## THE GRYPHON

"Her father," Oriel answered hotly, "is William John Darcy, who has as many million dollars as we have hundred pounds."

"Oh, the fruit man!" She raised her eyebrows. She turned her head away from him to her writing desk. For a few moments she thought in silence. Then impulsively she came toward him.

"Ulick," she said gently, "I want to see this girl. If she is everything I want her to be for your wife, then marry her, and God bless you both! I want to see her first, though, laddie. I can't let you make a mistake. Ulick, remember, I have only you in the world!"

He mumbled something incoherent, insincere. A year ago he might have been ingenuous enough to have accepted that. But he had been on his guard now, since he had left Trinity. He had been watching for every intonation of voice, every change of countenance. Her quick right-about and studied impulsiveness did not deceive him. He was on his guard.

And so they were married! Palmer, rector of Ballinard, who was as honest as the sun, wrote a long letter to William John Darcy, in which he extolled the virtues of Ulick Fitzhugh Fitzjohn, Earl of Oriel, and explained in a perfectly convincing but utterly unsentimental way that Darcy's daughter and the young Earl of Oriel were as much in love

## THE GRYPHON

with each other as it is possible for two human beings to be, and live. And also Palmer, rector of Ballinard, who was, as may be predicated from his cloth, as gentle as a dove, but was also, being a North of Ireland man, as cunning as a serpent, had many heart-to-heart talks with the Countess of Oriel. He explained to her the character of his friend Darcy. He explained the suspicion your American millionaire would have of international and titulary marriages. Let there be no talk of money or of marriage settlements, but wait a little. Be subtle, advised he. The girl could twist her father about her finger, and what was her father's would be hers and her husband's, and what was her husband's would be—the family's!

And so they were married, in the old Armagh Cathedral, wherein Ulick's father had been married, and his grandfather before him. In a nervous low voice, a voice full of loyalty and trust, Neysa promised to love, honour and obey Ulick Fitzhugh Fitzjohn. And in a voice proud and vibrant, and a little aggressive, it seemed, Oriel, on his hand, promised to cherish and protect her. The dowager countess was much affected.

"I don't know how it is," she told her friends, "but Neysa is the one girl in the world I should have chosen for Oriel."

And so they were married! And Anne, Dowager Countess of Oriel, was to live happy ever after.

## THE GRYPHON

### IV

I can see Darcy, the fruit man, as well to-day as in the days when he was alive—God rest him! A slight man, something on his daughter's build, with the same dark eyes. But where his daughter's eyes expressed only kindness and trust, his did more. It was an eye which saw visions and dreamed dreams, and there was the same kindness to it and the same trust. God be with him! I can see him now, with his shock of iron-grey hair, his broad restful hands, his somewhat Napoleonic face turned sidewise, and a kindly smile playing like a rainbow at the edges of his lips.

For all his peasant stock, he stood up at that wedding as dignified and as much at home there as the Ulster King-at-Arms. There was nobility to the man. There was great native tact, too, which is rarer. Few words were exchanged between Oriel and him, but they liked each other.

"You have the dearest thing in the world to me," he told Oriel after the ceremony.

"I know it, sir," Oriel answered him. "And I have the dearest thing in the world to myself"; and his straightforward reply pleased Darcy, who was a judge of men.

It was at the fruit man's suggestion that the couple took their honeymoon on one of his passenger

## THE GRYPHON

liners, to the ports where his men worked night and day. They came westward to Jamaica, with its colourful hills and its motley population, white man and black man, Hindu and Burmese and Himalayan. They crept into Colón, with its grey, ever-present clouds and its bustle of shipping. They went through Costa Rica, in carriage, on muleback, on puffy little railroad. They came to Colombia, lush, mysterious, a land of parrots and emeralds, of great mountains and of wild people in the hills. They went up the muddy Magdalena to Bogotá. At each place Oriel saw the thousands of men who were working for Darcy, loading and unloading his ships, bringing his fruit from the interior, guarding his piers, tending his plantations. Other things he saw too. He saw the great hospitals that the capitalist had erected to care for his men—fighting, for their sake, the fevers that had once made these ports hell holes. Somehow it had never occurred to him that one could do that in business. Business, it had appeared to him, was only a matter of buying and selling, a quick, rapid transaction of merchandise and money; but it loomed up in his mind now that here was something immensely big, immensely human, as great a factor of the world's history as arms, or government, or as even love.

At Barranquilla, at the *Pension Inglesa*, he met Church, the mining man, shrewd, small, tanned grey-haired.

## THE GRYPHON

"The reason your father-in-law's made a success in this Central American trade," Church said, "is that he's been honest, scrupulously honest, with the people. He's treated them as though they had reasoning power. And another thing: he's been decent to his workmen. They don't understand that, but they appreciate it. My God, man, if he got out to-morrow, there'd be stealing, grafting, looting, peonage even——"

In Bogotá, Andrews, the American minister, waxed enthusiastic over Darcy.

"The world sees in him only a shrewd business man," he told Oriel; "but I know better. Mr. Darcy is one of those idealists born once in a century. Others think of binding states together by arms, or by religion, or by speech. He dreams of binding them together in mutually profitable commerce. And he is thinking of that amity of relationship, Lord Oriel, when he is supposed to be calculating the fruit market in New York or the rates on freight. These people have had a hard time. Once the Spaniards pillaged them, and they are wary of an American invasion. But your father-in-law is changing that. He is doing more than a hostile army could do, more than the diplomats in Washington."

For the first time now since he had met Neysa he understood how rich her father was. He had known in a vague, detached way before that she



## THE GRYPHON

was heiress to millions of money; but what it represented he had never conceived. In the end it would all come to her, he supposed, and he would have the guardianship of it. But what would he do with it? In Ireland now, or within a few years, the Land Purchase Act would have wiped out the remainder of the estate, and all he would have would be twenty-eight acres of freehold, a strip of mountain, and an old house with a river flowing by it. Had he still been a landlord, accepting the responsibility of tenantry and taking their rent as return for the work, he might have broadened his field and they could have put the money to good use. But now all that a man in his position could do was to enter politics in London, using the fortune to further political aims with which the older man would have no sympathy. Of course Darcy might dispose of the money other than by bequeathing it to his daughter.

But still if he did not! The problem was still there. What was to be done? Oriel had little heart for the game of politics. That was what his mother would want him to do, and she would have her finger in it, too, he guessed, with her powerful ambitions. If that were the case, what would happen to the old man's dream, that mighty polity whose threads he was handling deftly and surely? Would it crumble and decay, falling into vicious, incapable hands on his death, as did the empires welded together

## THE GRYPHON

by great dead kings? A pity! he thought. A great pity! But what was to be done?

Darcy had returned to New York, and he wrote them to Santa Marta that he was going down to Jamaica. He would meet them there.

They were standing by the taffrail of the boat deck the night before they arrived in Kingston. A great half moon hung in the sky, and a full tropic stillness was over everything. Faintly they could hear the cleavage at the bows and the welter of the tread below, and faintly forward the bells rang the half hours. They were both silent, close together, lost in an immensity of dreams.

"Neysa," he asked suddenly, "do you think your father would give me a job?"

She caught him suddenly by the arm. She looked at him with eyes that were at first surprised, then incredulous, then sparkling with a sudden unintelligible joy.

"Ulick!" she asked breathlessly. "You mean that?"

"I do," he nodded stolidly.

A little dim mist came into her eyes, and she crept into his shoulder.

"I was a very happy girl," she said difficultly, "but now I am the happiest person in the world! Dad will be happy too. You don't know how happy. He loves that business. He has put his soul into it. And I love it because of him."

## THE GRYPHON

The next day, on the pilot boat, Darcy came aboard. He caught his daughter to him in a bear's hug. He gave Oriel a grip like a wrestler's.

"Listen, father-in-law," the boy burst forth, "I want a job with you. Do you think you could find me one?"

A smile played on the older man's lips, but his eyes were probing hard.

"I don't think I could, son," he said. "Every position in the company is filled by a trusted and trained man, and it would be unjust to him and injurious to the company if I were to take one out and give you his place. The only job I could give you," he laughed, "is checking bananas on the pier at twelve dollars a week."

"I'll take it," Oriel said.

The older man continued to look at him shrewdly, but the smile had disappeared.

"If you want it you can have it," he told Oriel. "But how will you and Neysa live?"

"I've got about seventy-five dollars a week of my own. I'm poor for a peer," the lad laughed. "and your twelve will make eighty-seven. We'll manage along on that. Can't we, Neysa?"

"Indeed we can," she told her father proudly.

"Think it over a bit," Darcy advised.

The purser came round with mail. There was a letter for Oriel from the dowager countess.

"So the honeymoon will soon be over, and you

## THE GRYPHON

two love birds will be winging your way home," she purred, and so on. There were a few references to relatives and friends, and a message for Neysa. "We are all awaiting your advent breathlessly. I suppose you have planned a tremendous splurge in London. Everybody is dying to see you, and talking of how lucky you were to capture the catch of the season. I have ruined myself buying some things to appear in, but I have to live up to my son and his billion-dollar bride. . . . We need you at home at once. All the North is arming and everybody must stand by. Bentinck-Bates was saying yesterday how lucky for the cause your marriage was. They expect wonderful things of you!

"My compliments to Mr. Darcy. Why doesn't he come over and join us? He could leave his business to managers, couldn't he? He has worked long enough. And he 'belongs' now. Tell him we won't treat him as an 'in-law.' He might buy a place, as Mr. Croker has done, and interest himself in the racing."

He crumpled the letter savagely, and savagely he threw it overboard. He walked over to his father-in-law and caught him by the arm.

"I want that twelve-dollar job, Dad Darcy," he said, "and no other. I've made up my mind."

## THE GRYPHON

### V

For two months now he had been going down to the piers about the Erie Basin, attired in serviceable trousers and a flannel shirt, and from seven in the morning until five in the afternoon pulling the catch of a machine that clanged every time a bunch of bananas was transferred from the hold of the squat white steamers to the recesses of a brown railway carriage. To the white stevedores and the coloured labourers he was simply "Aleck," and a good kid, as they phrased it. They had no idea he was Ulick Fitzhugh Fitzjohn, Earl of Oriel, son-in-law of the president of the line. They had no idea that this twelve-dollar-a-week man went home to an apartment on Clark Street, changed into evening clothes, and melted into the arms of a slight little woman, fragile as a Prince Rupert drop, gently dark as an April evening, and beautiful as a chord of fine music.

The elder Darcy came often to the apartment on Clark Street, oftener now that his daughter's face had undergone a sea change, had changed from a healthy hue of girlhood to a white spiritualism that suggested she was hovering about the confines of life and death. Her husband and her father said nothing to each other about it. They looked at

## THE GRYPHON

each other with haggard and bloodshot eyes, for Neysa's mother had died that way.

"It will be all right," she would laugh away her husband's frantic fears. "Tell me about to-day."

And he would tell her, with a sort of awed humour, incidents he had seen that day. He told her about emigrants who had come from Central America—Costa Ricans with great wide gestures; Colombians with the bearing of Corsican conspirators; men from Panamá, proud as Cato; gentle coloured folk from Jamaica who wanted to be hal-boys in the great apartment houses of New York, which appeared in their eyes to be greater than the palace Aladdin, the Master of the Lamp, had erected with the aid of Djinn. They had all crowded to the Independent Fruit Office, assured that Darcy, greatest of men, would place them; and Darcy did. Other companies thought that employment bureau of Darcy's good business; but Oriel knew better!

He told her, too, of an incident he had witnessed on Columbia Street. One negro was arguing with another about the fruit company.

"Lithen, Joe," he said. "I tell you something: Dat man Darcy could shoot crap for the Standard Oil, and if he loht, it wouldn't phathe him; no, thir, wouldn't phathe him in the leatht!"

The conversation had made Oriel laugh, but it had also given him an idea of the loyalty Darcy's



## THE GRYPHON

employees had for their chief, and of their sense of pride in him.

Perhaps it was because he, who was so seldom nervous, was scared half out of his wits; perhaps it was because he, who had the loyalty of two hundred thousand men, had only one love, and she his daughter, that made Darcy unburden himself to the younger man; but in those days of fear and haggardness the fruit king showed more of his inmost being and thoughts than he had ever done before.

For three weeks the fruit king disappeared. The press spoke of an insurrection in Nicaragua. The presidential election had been so close that the defeated candidate would not accept the evidence of the successful one. In the plaza of Managua artillery was stationed, riflery put. At a certain hour on a certain evening, as Central American revolutions are conducted, the revolt against the successful candidate was to begin. At two minutes before that time Darcy strolled into the square, his sun helmet in the crook of his arm, his kindly smile about the edges of his lips.

"Gentlemen," he announced in that resonant voice of his, so low and yet so ringing, and he laughed a little ricochendo of chuckles, "you don't want an undertaker here, you want a referee."

The last grace note of his laughter carried the day. The Press spoke of it as an instance of how

## THE GRYPHON

easily Central American republics are swayed; but Oriel understood that what swayed them was not the drama of the moment, but the proven honesty and integrity of the man.

There came a letter from his mother about this time:

“Davies has been talking to me. He said that the present Government has in mind the revival of the old duchy of Antrim. It would be the greatest possible honour that could be conferred on you, outside the abdication of royalty in your favour. The party would, of course, require a substantial *quid pro quo*.”

Right well he understood what she meant, he told himself with a bitter laugh. He was to be Ulick, first Duke of Antrim, not by the grace of God, but by grace of his wife's money. He was to be the figurehead, those hawk-faced politicians were to be the ship that sailed for some ambitious port, while his mother was to be at the steering wheel. Already he could see the paragraphs in the papers:

“At a house party given by the Dowager Countess of Oriel, at the house of her son, the newly created Duke of Antrim, there were present the Premier, the Solicitor-General, Sir John Ross of Bladensburg, and Sir Kenneth Wood, Assistant Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Matters of grave political import were under discussion.”

## THE GRYPHON

And in the scurrilous weeklies there would be paragraphs such as this:

"A certain charming countess, to whose son the government recently sold a duchy, paid for by the money of a recently acquired American wife, gave a house party last week. Over the walnuts and the wine it was decided that in the event of the death of the Home Secretary, the portfolio should go to——"

He winced as he thought of it, and he grew red with anger as he pictured those shrewd parliamentarians dividing up the money he was to give them for their ends, dividing up the spoils that his mother had told them they were certain of getting. He could see Boyd-Barett, the whip, talking to his mother of the plans.

"But if your son doesn't consent, Lady Oriel," he would object, drawling.

"I think I can vouch that he will," the countess would answer meaningly. "I know Oriel."

He raged there on the docks, while overseeing the workers or assisting the thunderous-voiced auctioneer. He could see the smiles of the party heads as they talked together over Lady Oriel's ambition. He could hear their sniggers as they thought of the American wife, whose dollars were to flow so easily into the partisan funds. There would be sneers about their cynical lips as they thought of him, the dummy aristocrat, the pawn

## THE GRYPHON

which they, the players, would move as it suited them, the kine to be milked! Hell blast them with brimstone——

“Easy on that!” the pier superintendent would tell him. “Easy, Aleck! What’s got you? You’re cussin’ your head off. What’s biting you?”

“Nothing,” he would reply, embarrassed that his feelings should have carried him away.

“I give you a straight tip, my son!” the superintendent would counsel. “Cut it out. Keep your mind on the job. You’re taking the old man’s money, and when you’re working you’re thinking of his business, not of your own. I’d hate to see you go, Aleck; you’re a good kid. But the old man’s on the square, and I’m on the square; and you’ll be on the square, too, my son, or it’ll be the hook for you. Get me, son?”

The old man! he would think. The old man! There was one for you, he said, whom even the shrewd New Yorkers acknowledged to be “on the square,” as they called it. He remembered, with a vague bursting sense of tenderness in his heart, every feeling between him and Darcy, every action, every thought. His mother had treated him as a chattel, to be bought and sold; his own political people had treated him as a pawn, to be moved this whither and there. But Darcy had treated him as a man. He had given Oriel his daughter, in the first place. There had been no false sentimentality

## THE GRYPHON

about the fruit man. When Oriel had elected to begin at the bottom of the ladder and to live, with Darcy's own daughter, on what must have seemed a pittance compared to what she had enjoyed before, to live in a little apartment, with one maid, where Neysa, before she was married, had had a staff of servants greater than ever had a Balkan royalty, Darcy had taken it as a matter of course. He had shown no favours to the young earl, when it came to work. He had treated him as a man and not as a son-in-law, and for that Oriel was grateful. How grateful he was perhaps only Darcy knew. And he had shown Oriel ideals—unwittingly perhaps, but still a fact—that would have graced Columbus, or Simon Bolivar, or any of the great heroes of the world. And with the results of this man's dreams, the tangible results—such as gold—shallow men like Bentinck-Bates were gambling for personal ambition, women like his mother dreamed the dreams of Maintenon!

If it had been any other trouble he was in, he would have told it without a moment's hesitation to Darcy and to his wife, but the sense that his own people were acting so dishonourably held him back. To acknowledge before them that his mother was plotting with their money, that the only interest she had in this love-marriage of her son was the interest of a financier in a commercial venture—to bare that would have been too appalling. It would

## THE GRYPHON

have been like the sons of Noe unbarring their father in wine!

There came the night when Azrael, Angel of Death, hovered over the apartment with black outspread wings. It seemed unnaturally cruel, like some grim joke an evil god might play, that he could not go to her, could not help her in this ordeal. Her muffled cries cut his heart like sharp steel. He remembered crying bitterly. It was Darcy took him out.

"We'll take a little walk," the fruit king said. "Come, son, let's go!"

And for hours they trudged about the streets, silent, haggard, fearful, in the mist of miserable rain. They said nothing as they walked elbow to elbow with each other, but in those hours, Oriel felt years afterward, some link was forged that held them closer than shackles of iron.

He would not look at that son of Neysa's when they brought it to him. He wanted to see her, to know if she were safe. She was, they told him, though there had been moments of great danger.

"I felt I was slipping away," she told him later, throbbing in the dim gloom. "Death would have been so easy. But I knew you wanted me—and I fought back. It was hard!"

He sent a long wire to his mother at Cannes. For the instant it appeared to him that even she, hard as she was, should be touched by this miracle,



## THE GRYPHON

that a grandson had been born to her, and above all that Neysa was safe. The answer came back like the crack of a whip:

"Now, I hope," said the wire, after a few phrases of perfunctory congratulation, "you will be sensible and come home. You are making yourself ridiculous, and what is worse, making me ridiculous. If you don't come at once I shall come and fetch you."

He set his teeth and tore the wire up, explaining to Neysa in some way that his mother was away from home, and that his message had not reached her. But for days, and for weeks after that, a terrible, nameless fear assailed him—that when she faced him he would give in weakly, as he had given in on a hundred occasions before. All his life she had dominated him, had made a science of it, until the sound of her voice was to his spirit like the crack of a lash on a slave's shoulders. He was like an addict under the power of some drug, or like a victim under the glance of a hypnotist. He had fought her domination when she was absent, hard though that had been. But when she was present, confronting him, terrible as an army with banners, what should he do? What should he do?

## VI

She knew that if she were to succeed with her son, she must give him no time for preparation, but

## THE GRYPHON

must descend on him swiftly, unexpectedly. She must catch him as though he were committing a fault. Secretly she had come to New York. Unexpectedly she had come to the apartment. It suited her, as much as it did him, that Neysa was out. Her father had asked her to meet him in New York.

She faced her son in the gathering gloom of the February twilight. He had just come in from the docks, and was still wearing his blue flannel shirt.

"I cannot understand it," she told him. "What is there for you here? It isn't as though you had to work or keep in your father-in-law's good graces to get the money. It will come to you in the long run. What is wrong with you, Ulick?"

"Mother," he told her, "there's more than that in the world. That's what I'm seeing now. Dad Darcy isn't working for money. He's working for a big ideal, and the money is added to it—comes in, you can see, as a matter of course. I want to help with a thing like that. I want to do things of my own——"

"Don't be ridiculous!" she snapped. "There's been just enough foolishness. I'll see Neysa when she comes in and talk to her. We can catch a boat home next Wednesday."

"I won't come," he replied doggedly.

She looked at him for a few instants, studying

## THE GRYPHON

him carefully. His face had changed a little in the six months he had been out of Ireland. There was a reliance to the mouth and his eyes were steady. Her manner changed suddenly.

"Now listen, Ulick," she argued. There was in her tones the patience of an older person talking to a younger. "I understand that there are such things as ambition and ideals. But at home there are bigger ambitions, bigger ideals. Come where you belong, and where the road is paved for your success. Think of it! There is your seat in the Peers, and here you stay, counting bananas on a dock. At home everything is open to you—ambassadorships, viceroalties. You can be the biggest man of your time. Surely the way for you is over there, not here. Come, Ulick, I will make you Viceroy of India. I will make you Premier of England. Only come!"

"I don't want anybody to make me anything," he persisted. "I want to stand on my own feet and make my own way."

He looked at her in a sort of terror. That hawk-like face of hers was pitched to a point of decision he had never seen it at before. The black eyes struck like daggers, for all her wheedling words. It seemed to him suddenly that she was like a crazed bird of prey, poisoning to strike viciously.

"Ulick," she went on in a sort of broken voice, "you promised once to be good to me. Don't

## THE GRYPHON

refuse me this. Think! I, who brought you up; I, who bore you——”

“I’ll do anything, mother,” he told her excitedly, “if you want it. But I will not go back. Do you need money to pay bills? I’ll find it for you. Do you want the house? Do you want the lands? Do you want the income? You can have it. You can have anything of mine. But I will not come over and spend my father-in-law’s money in politics on the other side.”

She was rapidly losing control of herself. The pent-up passions of thirty years burst like a sudden bomb.

“Live on the Riviera on your charity?” she sneered. “Be your wife’s pensioner? Am I that sort? Why, I gave you this girl. I brought you up to marry a girl like this. I schemed for a father-in-law with money for you. Is there no reward for me? You will come home! Do you hear me? Do you hear me?”

“I won’t,” he answered.

She came over and struck him savagely in the face.

“You are my son,” she nearly spat, “even if you were fifty years of age, and you shall do what I tell you!”

It was as though he were a child again, that sudden slap in the face. He felt he must obey her now, as he had obeyed her when she was in the

## THE GRYPHON

habit of telling him what people he should know and what he should do. His eyes wandered wildly about the room seeking some escape. They rested on the picture of his wife, the dim, sweet face, the smiling lips. Etched on his memory were the words by which he would always remember her, the words she had told him weakly after the birth of their child.

"I felt I was slipping away," she had murmured. "But I felt you wanted me—and I fought back. It was hard!"

Strength came to him like a rush of wind.

"I won't go back," he said calmly.

The new note in his voice startled her. She played her last card.

"I will go to this man Darcy myself and tell him how foolishly you are behaving. After he has had a talk with me, I don't think he'll look upon you as the successor to his commercial throne. I'll tell him exactly how weak your father was. He'll not have much confidence in you. He'll be pretty quick in sending you home."

She expected him to give in at that—to plead with her.

"Don't!" she expected he would have cried.

The answer came back clear as a bell:

"You can go to Dad Darcy and you can go to my wife Neysa, and you can say anything to them that you want, mother. I don't think it will have

## THE GRYPHON

any influence with them. I have made my decision. I won't go back!"

She was silent for a few moments. She moved slowly toward the door. He went forward to her.

"Don't speak to me!" she told him savagely. "Don't touch me! I'm finished with you!"

"Mother," he pleaded, and the tears came into his eyes, "don't feel that way. We can all be happy, even though I don't go back. Stay with us here. Come with me. I want to show you something. I want to show you your grandson."

She looked at him between the eyes with a glance that seared.

"I've had to do with your father," she said, "and I've had to do with you. I don't care to know any more of the breed." She swept out.

He was standing at the window, looking over the busy river, when his wife came in.

"Ulick, Ulick," she shouted excitedly, "Dad wants you to take charge of a plantation in Cuba! We'll go, won't we?"

"My Foggy Dew," he told her, "I'll go anywhere for your dad, and you'll go with me to the end of the world."

She drew away from him for an instant.

"Something queer about you, Ulick!" she laughed. "You look so much of a big man this evening. You look like Saint George after conquering the Dragon."



## THE GRYPHON

She snuggled into him again.

"Oh, by the way," she held up an accusing finger, "Albert, the hal-boy, says you had a lady calling on you. Who was it? And what did she want?"

"Oh, some woman or other," he answered, "who wanted me to go in for some cause or other—nothing of any importance."

## IV

### THE LION IN THE STREETS

YOU would not have called Mr. Fogel an uxorious husband, and you could not in strict justice have considered him henpecked, but he knew the value of a good wife—even if she was high-spirited—and he did everything in his power to indulge her whims. He was a short, dapper man, the ideal build for a jeweller, with a brown beard, flecked with white as a wave is streaked vertically with foam, and nervous hands. Mr. Fogel was fifty-four and his wife was thirty, and although he never admitted it to himself, he had in his mind's eye a romantic and poignant vision of a young man on a Norman charger, in shining armour, riding into peaceful Forest Hills and carrying her away on his pommel from the quaint, gabled cottage with the glass-knobbed door and artistic fireplaces over which she was queen regnant in his reign.

Which brought about the ruin of Mr. Fogel. For, while he was sitting in his workshop back of Taylor & Taylor's that Friday evening, introducing with great skill a small ruby eye into the golden head of a snake bracelet, the telephone rang with emphatic clamour.

"This is Dr. McCardell," said a voice at the

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

other end. "Your wife is ill. She wants to see you at once."

"What's wrong?" asked Mr. Fogel in a frenzy.

"Come out at once," said Dr. Cardell, and he rang off.

Without a moment's hesitation Mr. Fogel decided to go home. Here is where his uxorious, or, what even more unkind friends dubbed his henpecked, quality counts. It didn't matter that here before him was a piece of work he had promised to have finished by morning. At five o'clock that afternoon Mrs. Norden—Mrs. John, not Mrs. Paul—had entered Taylor & Taylor's with the broken bracelet, and with an air of pretty helplessness for so portly a person had asked Mr. Charles Taylor to have it mended at once. She explained she was sailing for Europe next morning.

"It shall be at your house by 7 a.m.," said Mr. Charles Taylor most gallantly.

And Mr. Fogel, the only person to whom work of so intimate a character could be entrusted, subscribed to the promise. He was glad to have the opportunity to earn a little more money that could be spent to such advantage on so pretty a little person as his wife. He set to work on the bracelet, which was a wonderful, flexible thing of red gold and minute dew-like diamonds, emeralds like microscopic green slugs, rubies like fireflies. It had once, very long ago, adorned the brown triceps of a Maharanee of

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

Kapurthala. Lucrezia Borgia had worn it. John Norden had bought it from the poverty-stricken little Queen of Portugal to lay it on the matronly plumpness of his Hoosier spouse. Mr. Fogel glowed with appreciation as he set the minute red eye. Then the telephone rang.

He looked at the bracelet for a moment, undecided what to do with it, and then remembering that on several occasions when Mrs. Fogel had announced herself ill they had been merely slight attacks of nerves, or absurd fancies that he had been able to charm away with his soothing presence and the touch of his fine hands, he decided to take the bracelet home with him. Into his right hip-pocket he pushed an unnecessarily large revolver; into his left hip-pocket he put his jeweller's case of delicate tools; into his right inside coat-pocket he placed the morocco case with the bracelet; bade a hasty good-night to the watchman, unlocked the front door, stepped out and bent to lock it again. Outside, Deacon Sayers was lying in wait for him, although he knew nothing about it.

Deacon Sayers had embraced the profession of crime very much as another would embrace the profession of medicine. He had studied it. He had attended, unknown to the old professor, a course of Lombroso's lectures on criminology, extracting an inverted benefit from them. He had read every handbook of criminal law and several

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

works on medical jurisprudence. He was a large, florid man, with benevolent white side-whiskers like wings, indeterminate features, black clothes, and a white collar and cravat. He wore a flappy hat like a Dissenting minister's and had a dignified presence. His studies had told what a man would do under any special circumstances. He knew, for instance, that Mr. Fogel had put the jewel-case into his inside right coat-pocket. It was the natural place for it, as the natural place for a revolver is on the right hip.

Mr. Fogel closed the door and rose with his bunch of keys in his hand. He saw the white, benevolent whiskers approach him.

"I beg your pardon," said Deacon Sayers, and with his left hand he neatly punched Mr. Fogel on his right jaw. He held him up with a brawny right arm, while he lifted the jewel-case out of the inside coat-pocket. He helped him toward the pavement.

"Hi, officer," he shouted to a young Tipperary policeman. He hailed a taxicab with snapping fingers. "My poor friend has epilepsy. Will you see him to the nearest hospital, while I telephone his unfortunate wife." The chauffeur stated heatedly afterwards that there were tears in the Deacon's eyes.

Five minutes later he was strolling down Fifth Avenue in the gathering dusk like some benign presence from another world. He stopped and looked

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

at windows. He paid the tribute of an admiring glance to a young matron in her limousine. He reproved a display of lingerie in a department-store window with a frown on his placid brow. At Thirty-fourth Street he paused, and it was there that Collins of the Central Office saw him.

At the age of three Collins had emigrated from Aberdeen to New York City, but thirty-seven years of America had not taken away the sandy gauntness of his features or his suspicious turn of mind. He was not a spectacular detective, but he was a thorough one.

"The proper place for an habitual criminal," was his theory, delivered in gaunt Scotch accents, "is the jail. If you can't arrest him for what he's done, arrest him for what he's going to do. Stick a gun in his pocket and charge him with having concealed weapons. It mayn't be law," he would add, "but it's good common-sense."

So, acting upon this theory, he watched Deacon Sayers for an instant as he stood on the sidewalk waiting for a young man who was threading his way toward him through the home-going crowd. Collins laid his hand on the Deacon's broadcloth shoulder. "You're under arrest!" he announced.

"For what?" asked the Deacon haughtily. The young man had come up and was looking on with half-scared eyes. He was a tall, willowy youth, of the professional-dancer type, with thin, well-marked



## THE LION IN THE STREETS

features whose plebeian cast was thinly veneered by a touch of refinement.

"You're just under arrest," said Collins simply.

"My young friend," the Deacon turned grandiosely to the willowy man, "I want you to observe, my young friend, that there is no safety for even the old and dignified in this city. There is a lion in the way. A lion is in the streets."

"Arrest the young fellow too," said Collins to a bluecoat who had hurried up.

The promptness of Collins gratified the Police Commissioner and Inspector Moreau not a little when, an hour and a half later, Mr. Charles Taylor, to whom a now conscious and panic-stricken Mr. Fogel appealed, called up and demanded action. He described the Deacon vaguely as Mr. Fogel had seen him before that crashing blackjack had struck at his frail jaw.

"You will be pleased to hear," said the Police Commissioner, "that Deacon Sayers is already under arrest. No matter what the newspapers say," he added with vain glory, "the New York police force is the finest in the world. Within one hour——"

"But the bracelet," insisted Mr. Charles Taylor. "You've got the bracelet?"

"There was no bracelet," answered the Police Commissioner, "either on him or on his alleged accomplice."

"I want that bracelet," stormed Taylor over the

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

wire. "I don't care a hang about your Deacon Sayers, do you hear? You can kick him out of jail any moment you like. I don't want him; I want that bracelet! I didn't want my man to be blackjacked simply to give you a chance to make a clever arrest. Do you hear? I want that bracelet! I want it and I want it at once, do you hear? Your job is to keep people from being robbed, instead of making arrests after the robbery has taken place. Do you hear?"

"And there is something in what he says," admitted the Commissioner to Inspector Moreau.

They sat for a long time smoking in the high-ceilinged Commissioner's room in Centre Street with its bronze shield and air of a great nobleman's study. Somewhere in the building a deputy was giving Deacon Sayers a third-degree examination. He reported no success.

"We had better send for your friend Jean Master," said the Commissioner to Inspector Moreau.

"We better had," agreed Moreau, with a great sigh of relief.

He came in, a little angry at having been hurried through dinner,—thin, fair, with his bald cleric's head and his keen, hunting, falcon's face. He helped himself to a cigarette from the Commissioner's case.

"He took the bracelet from the man Fogel at Forty-eighth Street, and he hadn't it with him when he was arrested at Thirty-fourth," the Commissioner

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

explained. "He didn't get a chance of passing it to the dancing fellow. So he must have got rid of it between."

"So it would seem," commented Master drily.

"He was going to tell the dancing fellow about it, but he pulled one of his religious spiels then and there," the Commissioner went on.

"You are wrong," Master interpolated. "He wasn't pulling any religious spiel as you put it. He was telling the man where the bracelet was."

"Where it was?"

"Yes. Where it was. You've simply got to find the 'lion in the streets.'"

They looked at each other blankly for a moment, the Commissioner and Moreau. They looked angrily at Master as though he were propounding some impudent conundrum. Suddenly the Commissioner chuckled. He slapped his great fat thigh with his great bronzed hand, with a sound as of a giant firecracker bursting. He laughed in rolling billows of noise. Little tears of merriment gathered in his eyes.

"I've got it," he shouted. "Cross and Howard's circus had a permit to parade across town this afternoon. They'd have been passing Forty-second Street about seven. He's chucked it into the lion's cage."

Moreau looked at his chief with an expression of awe on his vacuous features. His eyes bulged

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

into glistening admiration. Master smoked on calmly.

"The lion-tamer's in on the game, I guess," the Commissioner continued. "You can't trust circus people. They're the worst crooks in the world. That's what he's done with it. What do you think Mr. Master?"

"It sounds improbable," Master drawled, "but not impossible."

"Improbable be hanged," the Commissioner bellowed. "It's it. Hey, McCarthy, get the car."

They slipped up-town from Centre Street in the warm dusk. A fragrant, heated wind blew in their faces like a breeze from a scented island. Along the way arc-lamps sprang up at intervals like strange violet flowers. There was the busy shuffle of people going to and fro in the streets. There was the clang of electric-cars and the driving whirl of automobiles. They swung up the lighted river of Broadway and plunged into the lagoon of Union Square. Northward, Fifth Avenue worked itself into an interminable acute angle of white lamps. The Diana of Madison Square showed grotesquely against the dusk like a homing bird. They cut around and shot toward the Garden, with its four blocks of lighted windows and castellated turrets like a fortress in a Persian city.

"I want the lion-tamer," asserted the Commissioner and he showed his little gold badge to the

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

box-office clerk. "And I want to be brought to him."

They stole around the huge amphitheatre where five thousand white faces showed against the red flare of the gas like a great tray of pearls. A clown, they could see, was ambling about the ring, and the crowd were laughing their eyes wet. Back of the audience great cages stood in rows. A pair of ponies, not bigger than large dogs, stood with ears drooping. A panther loped about its cage as if it were actuated by invisible springs. As they passed, tigers looked at them somnolently and great Sahara lions rumbled deep in their throats. A camel, like a queer aquatic monster, ground steadily on its teeth with the faint noise of a saw. A buffoon munched a sandwich and read a book of poetry. A contortionist twisted himself into unbelievable attitudes, limbering himself for his ordeal in the ring, making strange, heart-breaking groans while an agony of sweat ran down his face. A child held up an ace of spades—Master shivered as he saw it—in its right hand while a sharpshooter in Tyrolese costume squinted down the sights of a rifle. An equestrienne sewed spangles on a miracle of a ruff. It was all like the disordered dream a child might have or an illustration from a toy-book.

Above everything there hung the warm, repulsive odour of great meat-eating animals, and occasionally

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

the tragic silence of it all was broken by the shrill chatter of monkeys and the high whooping of a cockatoo.

"Hi, Zenas!" shouted the box-office clerk.

A great rawboned figure of a man stepped from behind a cage and lunged forward. In his mauve-and-gold mock military uniform he looked like an ancient Captain of Janizaries. He must have been six feet four inches tall, Master judged, and built like a scaffolding. Along his gaunt jaw, against the brick-red of his face, brown scars showed in ridges, lacerations of mighty claws. He had the nose of an emperor and black, dot-like eyes with a point to them. His hands were like polypi—massive, shapeless things that could crush like a vice. Master placed him as a Moroccan Spaniard.

"Now, you——" the Commissioner began.

"If you will permit me," Master interrupted suavely. "What lions had you out to-day in the parade, Senor Zenas, and were they together or in separate cages?"

"The Sheik-el-Islam and The Cid," the lion-tamer growled. He looked at the group with savage impatience. "They were in separate cages."

"Who drove them, might I ask?" Master continued.

"I drove the Sheik," Zenas answered. "Bob Rogers drove The Cid."



## THE LION IN THE STREETS

"Might I see Bob Rogers?"

"Rogers!" ordered the lion-tamer. His voice rasped like a dissonant chord.

From between the cages a giant negro appeared, clad, like Zenas, in mauve and gold. He was built like Zenas, but he had no scars on his face. His right arm, however, was gone, and his sleeve was pinned to the coat. There the resemblance ended, for where Zenas was dour and vicious-looking, the negro's eyes flashed to and fro in merriment. His mouth expanded in a wide, glowing smile that showed his powerful teeth in a gleaming line of white. Master smiled in harmony. Master took a glance at his remaining hand. It was as big and powerful as Zenas's.

"I'm sorry to trouble you," Master apologized, "but does anybody ever attend to the lion except you?"

"None," the trainer answered.

"Have you cleaned out the straw in the cages since the parade?"

"There was no straw in the cages during the parade. They were clean concrete and iron. We cleaned them since for the night performance."

"You didn't find anything in either?"

"Not a thing," Zenas shook his head.

"Could anything be overlooked—say a piece of jewellery?" Master interrogated.

"I'd have seen it," the Spaniard said simply.

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

"Sorry to have troubled you," Master smiled in apology. "I was sure there was nothing, but the Commissioner would insist. Too bad. Good night."

"Wait a moment," the Commissioner argued.

"Come on, come on," Master urged them. They stepped outside into Madison Avenue. The black police-car stood by the kerb like a comet ready to be hurled into space. The commissioner stopped, puzzled and angry, with a frown gathering on his big, florid face. "Really, Mr. Master——" he began.

"I know, my dear man—I know all you are going to say," Master headed him off. "You asked me to investigate this thing and I'm doing it. Neither of those men is in the game. They're not trained animals, and if they had had the bracelet they'd have been afraid. Neither of them quivered an eyelash when we came on the scene. The negro was laughing all the time, and Zenas was his usual sulky self. Another reason I know of their innocence, my dear Commissioner, is that men of that type don't steal adroitly. Did you see their hands? Those aren't thieves' hands. Either of them could and would crush in your skull or choke you to death, but they couldn't lift a watch. No, you have got to have another explanation for the 'lion in the streets.'"

The Commissioner looked up and down the

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

Avenue with his eyes alert. He might have been watching, from his tense expression, for the lion to saunter through the pillars of Madison Square Garden with the bracelet hanging between his teeth. He rolled his cigar about his mouth in a manner that made Master give a shrug of the shoulders. Suddenly Moreau looked up from behind his glasses with his muddy, child's eyes intent.

"What is the German for 'lion,' Mr. Master?" he asked. Master looked at him with eyebrows raised in amused wonder.

"The German for 'lion,' Moreau, is *Loewe*," he answered.

"There's Loewe, the old receiver and fence, at Sixth Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street," Moreau mused. "I wonder could the Deacon have meant him? The Deacon might have slipped down from Fifth Avenue to Sixth and turned it over there. I wonder——" And he blinked like a schoolboy trying to puzzle out an algebraic equation.

The Commissioner gave vent to a bellow like the roar of a far-away train. "By George, he's got it!" he shouted, and he slapped his thigh again. "Moreau's got it. Get into the car."

They sped up the long lane of Fifth Avenue to Thirty-fourth Street, swung to the left down the broad crossing, and beat their way, like a vessel entering a choppy sea, into the maelstrom of traffic

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

in Herald Square. Around them motor-cars hummed like bees; green trolleys, like armoured battleships, ground mercilessly onward; a Subway train rumbled beneath them and an Elevated thundered above. High overhead a scarlet star hung on a department-store roof, like the one that brought the Magi to Bethlehem; while northward along Broadway electrical devices sparkled like disordered dreams—balls ran up and down hollow pillars; a phantom driver lashed his horses through a Roman arena; a pair of youths with boxing gloves led, countered, ducked, and disappeared; a cat played domestically with a ball of thread, while in the distance red rims of fire, to represent tires, rolled through space like a Chaldean augury. They whipped into Sixth Avenue and its comparative darkness engulfed them as if they had stepped out of a lighted drawing-room into the dark of a winter night. The queer undercurrent of life that runs through the Avenue like a minor chord flashed at them as from a biograph screen—a patient Neapolitan standing by his roasting chestnuts, the naphtha lamp throwing shadows on his swarthy, strongly marked face, brooding, passionate, like a creature of Zuloaga's; the yellow haze of a saloon; dark doorways where stranglers might hide; strange angular letters above a Greek restaurant, like a bar of Byzantine music through the nave of a cathedral. The car stopped with a jerk.

“Loewe's,” said Moreau succinctly.

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

"Now for the bracelet," growled the Commissioner. "Take it from me, Mr. Master, Moreau is a detective, a regular detective. He detects."

"Don't insult the man," Master murmured. They stepped out of the car and crossed the pavement. Before them rose the bulk of a great plate-glass window, with stout iron bars, through which faintly there peeped fat, gold letters with the name "Aaron Loewe." Through the dimness they could distinguish objects in the window, a row of watches set up like cock-shies at a fair; a string of wedding-rings; a flute and a pair of boxing-gloves; an ornate clock on top of which two gilt cupids aimed arrows at each other; a child's christening ring and a workman's set of tools. The inside of the shop was dark as a weasel's burrow. There was an air of evil about it as it crouched on Sixth Avenue, hidden on all sides by huge buildings and protected above by the framework of the Elevated railway—it was like the hiding-place of some white, furry and warm animal that would shoot out a hideous arm and whip an unwary passer-by toward it for heaven knows what evil purpose. A thieves' den it must be, Master thought, and a thieves' den it was. One would have to be very hungry before going in there to pledge anything. And over the door, in Satanic mockery, hung the proud Medici device, their golden globes on a rod, like three cherries on a twig.

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

The Commissioner was thumping on a side door with heavy, crashing strokes. Occasionally he rang the bell fiercely. Moreau stood by blinking on the footpath. A couple of idlers paused, and gazed at the police-car with gaping jaws. There was the sound of quick, short steps and of an old man wheezing. The door was opened with a curse.

"Ah, Aaron," the Commissioner greeted the pawnbroker with grim satisfaction. He motioned the others into the hall, and opening a side door passed into the shop. He snapped on the electric switch. He rubbed his hands and grinned.

"Well, Aaron," he laughed. "We got you at last."

He was a small, broad man, Master saw, built square, as it were, like a country house. His head was angular and grey, a dirty grey that suggested dust, and his beard was broad and dirty and came to a point, accentuating the breadth of his jaw. He might have been sixty, Master judged—and his eyes were grey and grotesquely small, with a queer screwed-up expression in the right one. His nose was beaked like a hawk's, and when he walked he hobbled from his hips, with the staccato motions of a marionette, as if his knees were blocks of solid bone and not a combination of grooves, sockets and levers. His neck fell in soft folds of skin. He was exactly the sort of thing that would live in that place—a foul,



## THE LION IN THE STREETS

creeping thing that all good men would wish to kill, and he was afraid, Master saw with uncharitable delight, horribly afraid. The blue, trowel-like hands he had were shaking, and his shoulders were shaking and his mouth twitched from right to left.

"What do you want?" he asked. "What do you want?"

The commissioner took out a new cigar, examined its gorgeous band, clipped it neatly with a pearl-handled knife, put it in his mouth, and lit it with care. It struck Master that it was very like a cat chuckling over the predicament of a mouse.

"He wants to know what we want, Moreau," he laughed. "We want him, don't we?"

"Yes, what is it?" the pawnbroker urged. His teeth chattered. "What do you want me for? What? What?"

"Shall I tell him, Moreau?" the Commissioner grinned. As by the snapping of an electric switch the laugh went out of his face. His jaw shot forward like a fist. His teeth set and his eyes hardened to granite.

"Kick in with the bracelet!" he roared. "I want no nonsense. Come across."

"What bracelet?" Loewe was near to crying. "I've got no bracelet. What bracelet?"

"Cut it out!" the Commissioner bullied. "Cut it out now! The bracelet the Deacon slipped you this evening."

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

"I haven't got any bracelet," Loewe protested. "I haven't got it and I never saw the Deacon. I tell you I haven't it—I tell you I haven't got it." He pounded the counter with both hands and there were high, shrill notes in his voice that were like the squeal of a rabbit when the harriers meet it on the turn. The pupils of his eyes dilated and his mouth gaped. "I don't know anything about it, I tell you. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing!"

"Get on your hat," said the Commissioner grimly. "We'll go down to Headquarters."

"If I may be permitted an observation," the calm, clear voice of Master broke in, "I suggest we go ahead and investigate somewhere else. There is no use following up here. The man hasn't got the bracelet."

"Of course he has the bracelet!" the Commissioner roared.

"I beg your pardon," said Master frigidly. "He has not."

"Why, the man's in a panic now. He's afraid. That shows he's got it," the Commissioner argued.

"I beg your pardon again," said Master. "It does not. If he had the bracelet he would have a perfectly good defence. He would be on his guard. Every emergency would be guarded against. He's in a panic, the incorrigible old scoundrel, but because he doesn't know what's wrong. If he had it he would be prepared for you."

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

The Commissioner paused in the middle of his anger. He looked at the quaking pawnbroker. He looked at Moreau. He looked at Master.

"You may be right," he conceded.

"I am always right," said Master. "Let's get out."

They left the shop without a word. Behind them the pawnbroker mopped his streaming face and barred his door again. The Commissioner walked toward the car.

"Let's get in," he invited.

"Oh, hang your old car," Master snapped. "I want to walk and think it out. Let's go over on Fifth Avenue."

They passed along Fortieth Street, past the little park where the children play in the daytime and the broken men collect at night. In the distance the Library showed white out of the darkness, like a crouching ghost. All around them, on Broadway, on Third Avenue, north on Forty-second and south on Thirty-fourth Streets, light blazed upward as from an underground spring. Above them, very steadily, five stars glowed and blotted out all the city light. They turned into Fifth Avenue and passed the Library. In front of the steps the Commissioner paused and threw out his arms.

"What am I going to say to this jeweller guy?" he asked of the Avenue. "Where in thunder is that hanged bracelet?"

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

He turned about suddenly in anger, for Master was laughing, not loudly or objectionably, but softly and enjoyably, as though somebody had played a rather good practical joke on him. He was looking at the brace of marble Assyrian lions crouched on the steps of the building. He looked at their mouths, their noses, their jaws. He contracted his brows for a moment and then nodded. He skipped up the steps and, climbing on the pedestal of the southernmost one, slipped his fingers deftly into its left ear. They watched him draw his fingers out and hold up in the white lamplight a thin golden lizard-like thing that flashed like a sunbeam.

"Here it is, if you want to know," he laughed.

"What the dickens!" gasped the Commissioner.

Master waved his stick at a hansom trotting across Forty-second Street. He put his hat firmly on his head and buttoned his light top-coat.

"How did he put it there?" the Commissioner asked, "without anybody noticing him?"

"Oh, everybody noticed him," Master laughed, "but no one paid attention. Nobody has any time at seven in the evening. If Mars walked along the Avenue at that hour no one would look at him—they'd think he was an advertisement for a new cigarette. Besides, what's wrong in a clerical-looking, short-sighted gentleman taking an interest in sculpture? Why shouldn't he look close at the lion if he wanted to?"

## THE LION IN THE STREETS

The hansom came to the pavement with a click of horse's hoofs. Master jumped in.

"Wait a moment," the Commissioner hailed. "I want to know——"

"Take him away, Moreau," Master muttered to the Inspector as the cab moved off. "He makes me very, very tired!"

## V

### SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

THE lights of Dunkirk slipped rearward, vibrating like a lantern at a ship's stern. They became a vague yellow splotch, like a hazy harvest moon; they became a dim halo, and narrowed down to an orange pin-point, like a smoker's match in a fog. Ypres showed southward in a pale aureole. Afar off the guns of Flanders thundered like drums.

Meriwell, as he leaned over the middle car of the dirigible, lowering his masked head to the wind, watched the black country skim by as if it were being pulled along by a rope. A spring wind cut past like a hurricane, and in it Meriwell could taste the sharp tang of gunpowder mingled with the scent of April flowers. Ypres flashed by beneath them and Cambrai rose like a star. The noise of the artillery discharges came nearer. It took on the heavy, booming tones of a March sea beating hollowly on cliffs.

"We're coming near the firing-line," Meriwell said to himself. "We ought to be rising now."

He glanced across to where the steersman stood cowed and rigid at his wheel, his slim, tall form suggested more than defined by the hooded electric



## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

lights. Beside him, poring over compass and map, his pale lawyer's face showing up like that of a hunting-bird, was the navigating lieutenant. In the shadows, leaning over the edge of the car, as a captain leans over his flying bridge, was the flight commander, old Colonel Sanderson. Meriwell glanced surreptitiously at his square-cut, tow-like beard and bowed engineer's shoulders. They seemed to droop more than ever to-night.

"Poor old skipper!" Meriwell muttered sympathetically.

The guns of the firing-line crashed into the air with heavy, shattering blasts. In the distance there showed the faint shadows of lights. Green shadows, that were lyddite; and infinitesimal pin-points of yellow, that were the flashes of rifles; and the pretty orange of shrapnel; and the blinding white of magnesium flares.

"Eighteen degrees up," the navigating lieutenant ordered. He watched his plumb-line while the steersman heaved on his wheel. "Easy! Steady! Right-o!"

The floor of the car tilted like the deck of a steamer rising to the swell. The huge dirigible nosed her way upward like a mounting dragon-fly. They passed through a fleece of cloud that touched them caressingly like soft fingers. The noise of battle beneath them faded into a vibrating bass chord. The propellers purred like giant cats.

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

"She answered like a blood mare," said the navigator, pride ringing in his voice.

"If only my guns and bombs go as well as your planes," Meriwell told him, "I'll be satisfied."

"They will, never fear," the navigator laughed.

They were all proud of her, navigator, gunnery lieutenant, engineers, and crew. Full-fledged, like Minerva from the head of Jove, she had appeared from the tousled brain of the queer, misshapen Scotch engineer of the Clyde, who had come knocking at the door of the War Office when the slug-shaped Zeppelins were pouring fire in the heart of London and the British airmen were relying on frail, insufficient biplanes—sparrow-hawks competing with eagles. They had, thank God! trusted that little man with the Scots accent and the brier pipe, and here they had her now in the air, three hundred feet of her, a miracle of aluminium and gas and oiled silk, rigid, dependable, fleet as a bullet from a sharpshooter's piece. Meriwell studied her lines through the darkness with a throb of pride: her graceful length, like some wonderful night insect; the wide sweep of her planes, like a jinn's wings, the shell-like horizontal ones to send her nosing upward like a hawk or to let her down in a gliding sea-gull's swoop, the vertical one like the rudder of a gigantic vessel; the three great baskets, attached to the keel with the trellised runway between them; the four propellers, humming like a nest of bees, two to the

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

forward car, two to the aft; the platform above the many-jointed aluminium-covered gasbags, with its emergency bridge and rapid-fire gun.

"We're up seven thousand feet," the navigating lieutenant grinned. "How do you like it?"

"Don't like it at all," Meriwell answered. His teeth were chattering.

"You'll like it less in a minute. I'm going up to ten."

The din of fighting below had vanished into a faint murmur and the flashing guns and flaming artillery had become small, flickering lights, like fireflies on an August night. Occasionally a cloud flicked past below them and shut off even the pin-points of light. Here and there a group of stars showed, coldly lustrous, while southward toward Rheims one fell sheer, like a bomb.

"I'd rather be shot than as cold as this," Meriwell grumbled. Beneath his leather suit and woollen mask his skin had become rough as sandpaper.

He looked about the car. The navigator stamped his feet and swung his arms with the cold. The steersman crouched low behind the wheel. Four of the crew huddled in blankets against the walls of the basket. Only the commander stood imperturbable and grim, looking into the night. The shaded electric bulbs threw a sickly yellow light over the mechanism of the dirigible; over the black signal-board, on which green, red, and white circles and

166

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

triangles showed, messages to and from the engineers fore and aft; over the row of switches, like those in a railroad tower, that opened the cages beneath the cars to release the pear-shaped bombs; over the navigator's map and compass. They outlined dimly the machine gun that peered over each side swathed in its oilskin coverings. They drew strange, green glints from barometer and spirit-level, and made silver sparkles on the frost crystals that were forming, parallelogram on parallelogram and triangle on triangle, among the twisted riggings of the car.

"What time is it?" Meriwell asked.

"It's ten-thirty," the navigator jerked. "We'll make Mainz by two and be back about dawn."

The cold became more dry and piercing. It seemed to ooze in at the pores and mingle with the blood and compose itself into a mixture that chilled flesh and bone. Meriwell felt his limbs going numb. The countryside beneath was becoming darker. There were no longer great chandeliers of light to show towns and small clusters that were villages. To the left a faint geometrical array of arc lamps rose dimly. The navigator crossed to the side of the car and looked at it for a moment. He shook his head grimly. Meriwell knew it was Brussels. A cloud enveloped them and dashed them with particles of dew that were like a shower of frost. Through the thick spray the figures of the steersman

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

and commander loomed up gigantically, like visitors from another world showing vaguely through a misty dawn.

There was something eerie, Meriwell thought, in the immobility of the commander. He should have shown more eagerness, more of a sense of satisfied ambition. For years the old engineer officer had lived in the hope of seeing England recapture her lead in the aviation of the world. He had worked night and day in his laboratory, testing gases, testing metals, working out models for a battleship of the air that would thrust aside the Zeppelin and the Schutte-Lanze as the steamer put aside the barquentine. And now to-night he was commanding his dream for the first time in action. He was to raid the great railway network of Mainz, over which German corps were entraining night and day for the last supreme effort to gain the coast towns. In two hours he would be tearing the mighty terminal to shreds of twisted rail and charred wood, and distorted lumps of iron that had once been panting locomotives. Meriwell was proud to be with him, and the commander should be proudest of all. The gunner remembered how the old man had pleaded for the details. The chief of staff had argued he was too old; he was too valuable. The chief had had in mind a thing Meriwell had forgotten and which suddenly came back to him with stunning force. But the old aviator had won.

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

"The old sportsman!" Meriwell said to himself, and his throat choked with pride; "the great old sportsman!"

He remembered how, on the first raid of the leprous-white Zeppelins from over the channel, the first house to be struck was the house of the old commander, a square, uncompromising, soldier-like house on Notting Hill, where his wife—the grey-haired, motherly lady with the dignified eyes—dwelt, and his widow daughter, mourning her husband dead somewhere in France. His soldier son, of the Sherwood Foresters, home on leave, was sleeping at the time. There were heard the high whir of propellers and the desultory crashing of anti-aircraft guns. Then, accurate as a thunder-bolt, the great pear-shaped bomb had dropped, with the crash of lightning striking a tree. A colleague of the Royal Artillery, a blunt old fighter, with a cropped grey moustache, had told him about it, tactfully, laconically, with a fighter's sympathy. He told him how the grey-haired lady had died—very dignified, as she had been in life; very peaceful, as befitted an upright gentlewoman, her calm features mercifully unmarked. He stumbled as he spoke of the young captain, for a soldier should die on the battle-field, with guns roaring and his men about him, instead of being potted like a rat in a corn-stack. When he came to the daughter his face diffused to purple and his grey eyes flashed.



## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

"Curse them!" he swore viciously, "curse them night, noon, and morning! living and dead! the rotten gallowsbirds!"

"That's all right, Carter," the aviator had said. "Thank you for telling me." And he had walked off, fumbling pitifully at his sword-belt. What black hairs he had left had turned white since then, and his grey eyes were more sunken, but his beard jutted savagely since, and his voice snapped commands to his airmen with a ring like that of steel.

"I wish we were over that railway station," said Meriwell to himself, grimly. He squinted across at the switches of the bomb-cages and at the silent machine guns in their oilskin swathings. "He's going to get some good work in to-night, if I can help."

The officer at the compass straightened suddenly. He punched at the indicator buttons in a quick burst of energy.

"Up planes," he shouted. "Nine degrees down."

"Nine down!" the steersman repeated. He heaved on his wheel with a long, graceful pull. The notches clicked successively like a clock in winding. The car tilted forward gradually. Meriwell grasped at a support to keep himself from sliding. Wind flew against them in a strong upward sweep. The steersman braced to his wheel like a wrestler. The propellers purred less loudly. Meriwell had the sensation of being gently pulled downward. He looked over the side of the car fearfully. A few

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

desultory lights showed dimly, like the lamps of a train in the distance. An engineer officer dropped into the car from the passage, electric torch in one hand and oil-can in the other. He reeked pungently of gasolene.

"Time you were going down," he remarked peevishly to the navigating lieutenant in strong Scots. "Do you want all my engines to freeze?"

"It'll be hot enough pretty soon," the navigator jeered at him.

"Where are we?" Meriwell asked.

"South of Maestricht," the lieutenant answered. He was as excited as a schoolboy. "We'll be over the border in a minute." He leaned toward the air speed indicator. "Doing seventy-two miles an hour," he shouted after the engineer.

It was warmer now. Meriwell glanced at the scale beside the barometer and saw it registered two thousand five hundred feet. Vague, clean scents stole through the wind—the white odour of hawthorn and the freshness of spring grass and early flowers, and the transparent odour of the wind, like the transparent taste of water. Sounds rose vaguely into the air—the shadows of sounds, it seemed—the baying of an uneasy dog and the twitter of startled birds. An automobile-horn screamed raucously and somewhere there was the cutting whistle of a train. As he leaned over the side of the car, the gunnery lieutenant saw the sparsely lighted land

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

slip away beneath them as a pier slips away from a liner. Occasionally there was a brightly lighted municipal building; occasionally a microscopic point that Meriwell felt was a man with an lantern. Here and there a forge licked like flames on a volcano—a mute suggestion of war in which labour ceased neither night nor day. Afar off a flashing line of lights, like the lighted fuse of a crude mine, showed a train speeding. Meriwell felt himself looking at these things as a disembodied spirit might—the last odour and sound and sight of an earth that years of dwelling in had invested with a great affection. He felt himself shiver.

He moved slightly against the edge of the car, and as he did he discovered, with a sense of shock, that his hand had grasped the rail so tightly that he could hardly move it. The horrible intent nervousness that airmen know was lapping itself about him. He felt a wild desire to find himself on earth again, so wild that he had to clinch his teeth to prevent himself from jumping over the side of the car. He was suddenly conscious of his nerves—they seemed to spread all over his body like the veins of an ivy leaf, to be writhing, to be crying at his finger-tips. A great fear came on him, as it might come on a man swimming in the ocean far from sight of land or sail. They had no right to be there, he said to himself fiercely, no right to be high among the winds. They were intruders,

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

impertinently encroaching on the domain of some Power whose inalienable domain the air was. They might irritate It, who had placed them on the earth to walk with feet on it and not above it to fly with wings. At any moment it might arise and smite their meagre human device of gas and steel as a man might smash a fly on the wall. He cowered suddenly, as if expecting a blow.

A faint exhalation of pale light showed to the north-east like a phosphorescent cloud—Aix-la-Chapelle! So they were over the border at last! Meriwell's teeth set and his eyes glinted. A sense of danger seized him, and suddenly there began running in his head the full sonorous rhythm of the "Watch upon the Rhine." They were over the iron wall at last, over the impregnable ring of steel. In spite of singing, in spite of all boasting—and as he felt his blood pulse proudly another chilling terror came over him. He felt as if the souls of all the dead fighters of the empire were rising up against them in a vast current of wings, Saxon men and Prussian and Hessian, soldiers of Bavaria and of Württemberg, levies of the Hansa towns—striking at the steel bird with ineffectual, spiritual fingers, clinging pathetically to rigging and nacelle and plane, gazing hatefully at the invaders with horrible, bloodshot, unbodily eyes. . . .

The navigator turned suddenly to the man at the wheel.

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

"What the deuce is wrong with you?" he raged. "Starboard, I said. Starboard!"

The steersman bent to the wheel. He tugged and pushed until the veins stood out on his forehead like ropes.

"Can't do anything, sir," he stammered, "I'm jammed."

The navigator jumped to the signal-board. He snapped switches like fingers cracking. He leaned into the shelter-box of the speaking-tube.

"Cut off," he shouted, "the rudder's jammed. Engineer-lieutenant amidships!"

The hum of the propellers died away musically. The dirigible glided easily like a bird volplaning. There was the shuffle of feet along the metal-latticed passage. The dour Scots lieutenant dropped into the car, cotton waste in one hand and oil-can in the other. His second, a bright-cheeked Suffolk lad, leaped agilely after him.

"Oil on the hinges all evaporated — with your seventy-two miles an hour," the lieutenant snapped at the navigator. "I'll go aft and oil up."

"I'll do that," the second urged. He caught at the oil-can and plucked his torch from its scabbard. They heard him patter aft in the rear car. They saw his light flicker for an instant as he swung into the rigging. The Scotsman looked after him with an affectionate eye.

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

"A fine lad!" he murmured, "and a fine nerve he has!"

As he looked over the rail of the nacelle Meriwell saw the earth swing beneath him gently like a cradle rocking. The swaying lights gave him a sense of dizziness. He felt suddenly that the earth was a small thing, bowling through space like a tossed ball.

"Right!" he heard the engineer second hail faintly.

"Right-o!" came the cheery call of the navigator.

He watched the light of the boy's torch as he crept along the rigging to the main car. He heard him bandy a hearty word with somebody. He heard a gruff word of caution, a laugh, and a choked scream. Meriwell sprang to his full height and grasped the rail with both hands. He saw the flicker of the shadow as it plunged downward.

"My God!" he blurted. "He's gone!"

The navigator rushed to the side of the car like a maniac. The steersman half-turned from the wheel. The engineer officer stiffened like a pointing dog.

"He's gone!" the navigator said stupidly. "Poor Conroy's gone!"

They stood a moment silent, looking at each other in white horror. The commander came out of the shadows. He took his peaked cap off.

"God be good to a gallant officer!" he said.



## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

"Amen!" Meriwell answered.

The engineer strode forward silently through the passage. The commander touched the navigating officer on the arm.

"Ahead, Mr. Brennan," he said simply.

The navigator caught up his tube.

"Full ahead," he ordered. He turned to the steersman. "South-east by east," he directed.

"South-east by east," the steersman repeated mechanically. The propellers throbbed, whirred, hummed. The night air cut against them like a whip. A lone star showed up for a moment in a break of cloud, and then disappeared again, as a stage disappears between closing curtains.

Meriwell felt dazed. War—this wasn't war! This was a puny fooling with the engines of destiny, children pulling the triggers of firearms. He remembered how a great-uncle of his had died at Balaclava: a bright morning with the battle-drums beating; guns pealing, soldiers cheering; Cardigan riding gallantly at the head of the Light Brigade. *Pro patria mori!* Yes—but to fall two thousand feet in the night-time and to strike an alien ground with a sickening thud—that was not war. That was horror. He remembered inconsequently how he had heard that a man would be dead before he struck the ground and the thought consoled him somewhat.

Stolberg slipped past dreamily in a murk, Lamers-

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

dorf, Blankenheim, Adenau and Hönningen. Carts rattled as they flashed over Dumpelfeld. At Naub an alert sentry fired his Mauser, a whip's crack and a bullet's futile ping. Coblenz flitted past and they were over the Rhine, black, undulating, reflecting mistily the lamps of unsleeping barges. They swung over Wiesbaden, and Mainz came toward them, ambling like a man into ambush. The dirigible tilted upward at an angle of thirty. Meriwell sprang to the centre of the car. The commander climbed forward.

"Remember," he warned. "Not a second to waste!"

Doubt and nervousness dropped from Meriwell like a cloak. His brain sprang into action like a boxer's muscles at the call of the gong. He clambered forward along the passage toward the first car. Already the gun crew had stripped the covers from the machine guns. Men stood alongside the rails with queer umbrella-like things in their hands—the asbestos parachutes, with their naphtha-soaked torch in the handle, flares that would light up every cranny in the ground beneath and protect the dirigible from the light of the flares themselves.

"Ready, gunner?" asked the navigating lieutenant.

"Ready," Meriwell sang back.

They swung toward the town easily as a ship comes to its pier. Beneath them they could see the lights of the railroad station, big violet globes

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

that radiated like stars. Men hurried to and fro along the concrete platforms—queer, squat, huddled figures. Two engines fussed in and out like busy housewives. In one corner was a massed city of railroad-cars. Rails shone in a bewildering intricacy like a metal puzzle. Long, lank sheds showed like barns.

"Ease up," the commander ordered. He stood square in the centre of the car, his beard jutting, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. It was as if some main nerve had suddenly come into play, electrifying the great aluminium vessel. The navigator sprang to the speaking-tube.

"Cut off," he shouted. He thrust the steersman away from the wheel and caught at the spokes. "Figure of eight," he muttered. The dirigible swung gracefully in a curve leftward. Meriwell looked over the side again and raised his night-glasses. On the platforms beneath men were running to and fro excitedly. As they looked upward they had the appearance of a child's tin soldiers gazing fearsomely at a human being. A whistle cut metallically into the air. A carbine cracked. A searchlight shot skyward in a broad ribbon of white and began casting about like a fisherman's line. Somewhere there was a thudding boom, a whining scream, and a white star opened like a flower three hundred yards away with a crash like wood breaking.

"Go ahead, Mr. Meriwell," the commander directed.

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

Meriwell raised his megaphone to his lips.

"Overboard, the parachutes," he thundered.

There was a burst of murky, yellow flame fore and aft. Six flaming torches floated downward like snowflakes falling. The town cowered darkly to the rear of them. Beneath, to the right, the station showed as if lit up by some great conflagration. Above, everything seemed to have gone grotesquely black. Meriwell could hardly see across the car. Another searchlight leaped into the air and crossed the first one. They stabbed about like the tentacles of an octopus. The anti-aircraft guns shot six white stars to port in rapid succession like revolver shots. Along the concrete platforms a brace of sharpshooters dropped to their knees and cuddled their pieces to their cheeks. The dirigible moved with easy dignity toward the station. Meriwell calculated a moment. The bombs in the fall would carry forward in the direction the dirigible was headed for. He would have to wait a moment. Weights, distance, heights, flashed through his head like the dots and dashes of a Morse code.

"Sections A and B, lanyards 3 and 4, fore and aft," he bellowed. "Heave on!"

The dirigible shivered and jumped like a restive horse as the gunners heaved on their switches and the weighted bombs dropped from their cages. A searchlight caught the great hawk for a moment and showed it grey and lustrous like a battleship at sea.

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

The navigator swung his wheel about with a jerk. The dirigible turned like a hare. The propellers burst into a wild, spasmodic hum. They oscillated dangerously. Meriwell clung on to the side and looked over.

Eight great splotches of red flame burst suddenly on the ground, sideways, like water splashing. They showed red and angry like a man's wound. There were dark streaks among them—earth thrown up, men, metal, concrete. A puff of hot wind struck the car, and a vast unspeakable noise, a maddened, crashing roar, like the earth protesting at being attacked—a shuddering, horrible thing that drowned the feeble crackling of the guns and seemed to blot out life itself for a moment. The dirigible shivered like a feather in a gully of wind.

"Ease up," he called to the navigator. "A and B, lanyards 2 and 5, fore and aft," he roared again. Again the jump and curvet of the car; the red cup-like explosions, the terror of sound. A gun boomed southward, and something passed them with a high shriek. The searchlight caught them again and hung on with the tenacity of a bulldog. Something like a fly appeared in the west.

"Look out," the commander warned the lieutenant at the wheel. "Get ready to rise."

Meriwell looked downward again with his glasses. The naphtha planes were approaching the junction on their drop and were lighting up the scene with a

180

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

lurid Satanic glow. The glasses nearly slipped from his hands. Beneath him was chaos. The glittering rails, the compact platforms, the lank sheds, the massed cars, the violet lights were no longer there. The terminal showed like a ploughed field—a wilderness of stone and earth, of twisted metal and shattered wood. Great chasms showed where the bombs had struck; little hillocks of thrown-up earth; great iron pillars broken in two like match-wood; huddled figures that had been soldiers on the platform; while from the massed cars and the long sheds great waves of red and blackish flame showed with foam tops of rolling brown smoke, rolling, licking, crackling, roaring, like a mediæval dream of hell.

"I don't need section C," he laughed. All the havoc had been wrought by the light bombs. There were still eight mammoth pears in their cages, unused. He could save those.

"Get the bridge now, Mr. Meriwell," the commander instructed, "and swing around to the forts."

"Empty ballast," roared the navigator.

There was a gurgle as the stop-cocks on the water-tanks of the keel were opened—a hollow rushing that should have ended in a splash. In the glaring light the water poured downward in two great streams fore and aft like silver cables falling. The dirigible rose as if drawn upward. Bombs burst like firecrackers. Beneath, the fire rustled like



## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

crushed paper and exploded now and then, in queer, hollow, inadequate sounds. The navigator swung over the river. Four thousand feet below, the bridge showed over the black ribbon of the Rhine like a plank over a rivulet. Meriwell watched it with the eye of a cat ready to spring on a mouse.

"Ready on section C," he warned, "lanyards 2 and 3, fore and aft."

They floated along hazily, like a stick along a river. The anti-aircraft guns broke into a passion of whipping reports. The searchlights cut into the air like thrusting bayonets.

"Heave on!" he yelled suddenly.

The dirigible lifted violently like a canoe struck by a great wave. There was a loud whirring in the air as the bombs dropped downward. Meriwell felt his heart jump to his mouth. He peered over the edge breathlessly, his hands gripping the rail with sudden fear. Mechanically he opened his mouth to protect his ear-drums from the report, and as he did a vast wave of orange flame, like discoloured sheet lightning, seemed to flick along the river. For a moment, soundless, the river rose in its bed as if struck by a mighty hand. The great stone bridge disappeared as if kicked away.

"My God!" said Meriwell hoarsely, "my God!"

Then suddenly noise struck him between the shoulder-blades, noise such as he could hardly believe possible—an infinitude of sound that rocked

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

him like a crashing blow, a sound as of two planets meeting in mid-course, a gigantic forbidden thing, that only gods should make.

"The bridge is gone," said Meriwell stupidly.

A great hush swung over the town. The anti-aircraft guns stuttered and died. The futile rifle fire stopped. The thunder of the forts was cut off in mid-air. Only the blaze at the junction roared a little like a forced draught. Over the river all was black. The water had shut off the flare of the explosion. The searchlight struck the outer cover of the dirigible as a spear strikes a fish. There was the throb of propellers.

"Triplane to starboard," the navigator warned.

"Send him down, Mr. Meriwell," the commander ordered calmly. "Navigator, put the men by the engines ready to start on the word."

The triplane rose jerkily in the air like a toy at the end of a string. Its three shelf-like planes showed dimly and vaguely like a great kite. Meriwell felt sorry for it—it was a game, chivalrous thing, to rise in the air to give battle to the leviathan. He felt a great throb of sympathy and sorrow for it. It looked such a puny thing—but he mustn't let it get above him, or alongside him——

"Searchlight on starboard gun," he snapped.

A sergeant and corporal sprang to the Maxim. They clamped a thing like an automobile-lamp to the barrel. They snapped a switch, and a line of

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

light shot out like a harpoon. It whipped about like a fencer's blade, parrying, thrusting, lifting, dropping. The corporal threw his leg over the saddle and caught the trigger.

"When you see her, fire!" Meriwell ordered.

She showed up for a moment, black and fragile, and motionless it seemed. The gun broke into an infuriated chatter. The cartridge-tape leaped like a hooked eel. Suddenly they saw the great kite twist like a wounded bird. It dropped in a wavering zigzag while two black pin-points dropped in plumb-lines.

"God help them!" Meriwell breathed.

The propellers of the dirigible plunged into their loud whir like the first peal of an organ. Meriwell staggered and lurched. The dirigible shot forward like a stone from a sling. The commander fell to pacing the car nervously. His fingers cracked like castanets. His beard twitched. He turned on the gunner.

"Never mind the forts," he shouted. "We've done enough. What have you left?"

"Sixteen small and four large bombs," Meriwell answered.

"Get ready," he warned. He turned to the navigator. "Back and over the town."

"Back and over the town?" the navigator queried stupidly. "Over the town?"

"Yes," the commander barked. His face seemed

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

queerly white and strained. "Let them have all you've got, Mr. Meriwell."

"You don't mean——?" Meriwell nearly laughed in amazement. "Bombard the town?"

"Yes. Quick. Circle around and let go."

A great, tawny lake of flame poured over the acreage of cars in the junction. It lighted the town dully and they could see it hazily, through a smoke screen, as it were. The narrow Gothic buildings showed up as in a painting; the peaceful cathedral; the great, squat municipal hall; the queer dolls' houses—it all seemed like a theatrical spectacle. Southward the gunners still threw their white stars and the artillery of the forts stabbed red and blindly into the murky fog.

"Take the wheel," the navigator told the steersman. "Planes up eighteen and swing in a circle." He looked at the commander with grave, disquieted eyes.

Meriwell caught at the commander's sleeve.

"My God, sir! You can't do that!" he shouted in horror. "You can't fire on civilians."

"I can," said the old man doggedly. "I can and I will."

"You're mad, sir! You're mad!" he babbled.

A stray shot cut screaming past them. They rocked from the current. The crew moved about the car uneasily.

"Bring her around," the commander ordered. The navigator never moved.

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

A vast desire to throw himself on the old commander came on Meriwell, to bind him hand and foot. He must have gone crazy, he judged. That last terrific explosion had injured his brain. Then suddenly he remembered the house on Notting Hill, the white-haired lady who had died in the night raid, the screaming, distraught daughter, the gallant captain of Sherwood Foresters killed like a rat in a trap. He understood.

"I can't do it, sir," the navigator replied.

Meriwell took a step toward him. His hands went out pleadingly.

"I know, sir. I understand. But we can't do it. I won't give the order and the men wouldn't pull the lanyards," his voice stumbled. "We're soldiers," he continued, "and we're fighting soldiers—not unarmed men, not sleeping children, not women."

There was a moment's silence. The wind blew about them as from a great blast-pipe. The reports of the air-guns ceased for a moment and began intermittently. The navigator turned his head away. Meriwell looked at the commander's white face.

"Soldiers!" he repeated. "Clean fighters. Soldiers and gentlemen. Officers and gentlemen, as your son was. And your wife was a soldier's wife and your daughter was a soldier's daughter."

He waved his hand toward the town.

"We've smashed the junction and smashed the bridge. No train will pass that way again and no

## SUPERDIRIGIBLE "GAMMA-I"

ship will come up the Rhine. We've done our work—and not a building outside injured and not a civilian attacked. They'd be proud of that, your people, sir. You can't do this other thing, sir. It isn't the game. It isn't cricket."

He watched the commander's face keenly. He waited until he saw the bitter twist pass from the mouth and the frown go out of his eyes.

"They wouldn't want that," he urged. "They'd be ashamed, those people of yours." He waited a moment. "The old code, sir, an officer and a gentleman."

The commander's head drooped a little. The stiff poise of his grey beard softened. His shoulders lost their tenseness suddenly.

"I—I——" he wavered. He turned to the navigator. "Right about and back," he said weakly. He slipped into the rear among the shadows.

The navigator sprang to his compass.

"Nor'-west by west," he ordered.

"Nor'-west by west," the steersman repeated mechanically.

And as Meriwell leaned over the car he saw the town race flatly away from them, while the guns still chattered viciously, like disturbed magpies, and their charges burst high in the air into pretty, artificial stars.



## VI

### THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

HE turned into Bryant Park and sat on one of the seats, with his shabby overcoat open, in spite of the steely cold of the bright December day. So Marian Long was back, he said to himself, half in ecstasy and half in fear. Marian Long was back, and he had met her! So Marian Long was back!

A man he knew had been interested in a painting of Zuloaga's at the Metropolitan—a garish, explosive thing, the picture of Anita Ramirez on a yellow couch, and he had asked Kane to go up and see it. He would give Kane forty dollars for a reproduction, he promised, and Kane had gone. He had come out of the Museum and was on his way downtown to meet a rector who had the giving away of a piece of church decoration, as paltry a job as the other. A block south of the Plaza someone laid a hand on his arm, and he heard his name breathed in shocked accents.

“Leonard Kane!”

He turned around swiftly, nervous at the memory of that silvery voice, and before him he saw Marian Long. It was ten years since he had seen her last, but she was still the same slim, tall, black-haired imperious-looking woman—except for the little lines

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

about the mouth and eyes that skilled grooming had done its best to conceal, and the eyes themselves, which were those of a woman of the world, and not, as the last time, those of a selfish girl. He saw the great blue limousine pulled up to the kerb, and he noted her splendid, sweeping furs.

"Leonard Kane!" she repeated, and this time there was pity in her voice as well as shock.

"Come with me," and she moved toward the car.

"I'm sorry," he refused. "I have an appointment."

Her eyes still roved over his appearance, the clean shabbiness of him. He knew she was noticing the grey hairs that were beginning to weave in at the temples, and how the proud look had gone from his face and the woebegone, stubborn expression of defeat had replaced it.

"You will come and see me, Leonard?" she said. "I'm opening at the Irving next week, or come to my hotel."

He shook his head at her.

"Then I will come and see you," she told him impulsively. "Is your studio in the telephone book?"

He didn't even reply to that, but he saw from the look in her eyes that she knew it was.

"Good-bye, Leonard! I'm coming," was the last thing she said. And she entered the car, and he walked down the street, doggedly, defensively, but with the feeling gaining in him that a miraculous thing had

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

occurred, and that it was going to continue. Dazedly he walked into the park and sat down.

He stayed there for an hour at least, and getting up he had made his way home, lengthily, toward the dingy Bronx street where he lived, in an apartment above a druggist's store. He let himself in, and as he did so he could hear his wife humming, gaily as always, in the kitchen beyond. She came into the room and stood in the door for an instant, a smile dimpling her fair, healthy face, and brimming in her blue eyes.

"Leonard, you're excited," she challenged. "What is it about?"

"Nothing," he answered with careful nonchalance.

"I don't care what it's about," she told him. "I'm only so glad that for once you don't look unhappy."

At Victor Marec's, in Paris, ten years ago, they had conceded Leonard Kane to be a genius, even before he had exhibited in the Salon, and the picture had been bought by the Government. They conceded him to be a genius, although he did not fall into the accepted idea of how a genius should act. He came quietly from Harper's Ferry, with a modest legacy and some training. He settled in a comfortable and quiet house, ate full and well-cooked meals, went about with friends and visited theatres instead of screaming about art in a low-priced restaurant, or dancing at the nearest ball. His clothes were clean;

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

his hair well-groomed; his face always shaven. This did not accord with the accepted idea of genius, and yet Kane undoubtedly was one. Witness his "Vineyard on the Marne," and his portrait of Miss Anne Schuyler.

And another reason that puzzled them exceedingly was that Leonard Kane seemed never to fall in love. Toward the models he was courteous and distant. Toward the mob of young women who frequented Marec's he was friendly but cold. It was only after he had decided to leave Paris and to come to New York that the matter of Marian occurred, and of that neither master nor pupil, *massière* nor model, knew anything. To them it was sufficient that one day Kane was among them, superlatively and inexplicably happy, painting in long, firm sweeps, and that the next he had disappeared as completely as a pebble cast into a deep lake. And that, though they knew it not, was the doing of Marian Long.

She had come under the tutelage of her mother to the little hotel in the Rue Boursault, where Kane lived. She was twenty-six then, and had experienced already some measure of success as an actress in America—in minor parts, it is true, but critics recognized in her the makings of a great tragedienne. She had brains, had Marian Long—none ever denied her that—and where another actress would have striven ahead in New York, patiently waiting for success, Marian Long went forth to collect the

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

weapons to conquer it. She came to London to study the tragediennes there. She came to Paris to see the acting at the Française and the Odéon and the Femina.

She impressed him first as one of Botticelli's women—pale, slim, with features refined to the point of delicacy. In her eyes there was a great sense of feeling, but back of that was a substratum of hardness, of steely purpose. He had never heard of her, but she knew of him, and sought his acquaintance. He admired in a detached way the Tanagrine regularity of her features, the depth of her eyes, and the lights and shadows of her face. And then suddenly he was head over heels in love with her, and she with him.

It was just the violent impact of two spirits that clove through everything toward each other. They both experienced the vague and delicate emotions that forerun the actuality of love—the desire for each other's companionship; the touch of hands that has the thrill of electricity and the softness of fine velvet; the hours spent together which seem in enjoyment like the glory of sunlight and in retrospect have the delicate shade of twilight; the delight in speaking each other's name like a bar of clear music; the delicious sense of uncertainty. . . .

There was something dramatic and picturesque in their being in Paris together that appealed to her as an actress and to him as a painter, and that im-

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

pression fired them until they could withhold their feelings no longer. They had wandered together about Paris—to the Halles, to the Bois, about Versailles. In the forest of Fontainebleau, one June evening, he told her he loved her.

"I love you, Marian," he looked at her straight and calmly, "and I want you to marry me."

For answer she caught his head down and kissed him.

"I will marry you," she whispered to him, "because I love you, too."

And then for them came two weeks of delirium, in which he saw visions and dreamed dreams, greater than any of the world's masterpieces, and in which she felt that there was never a *rôle* in the whole history of playing that she could not interpret, Their eyes were opened and they were as gods, knowing good and evil.

One might have surmised there was that depth of feeling in her from the look in her eyes, but beyond that capacity for feeling was the steely substratum of ambition. Their love rose with the suddenness of a summer thunderstorm and it sun-dered with the instantaneity of a lightning flash.

"When, in the Fall, we are back home, and married . . ." he was saying.

"My dear," she smiled, "we are not going to be married for a longer time than that. For years, maybe."

"For years?" he said, aghast.



## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

"When I have made a big, definite success in New York or London," she said, "then we'll get married. And that may be soon."

"But, darling," he puzzled, "what has that to do with getting married?"

She shook her head slowly, and he could read an inexorable purpose in her eyes.

"I am not going to endanger my success. I have worked too hard for the chances I got. But, dear, it won't be long. Three years, maybe. Four at most."

"Marian," he stuttered, "you don't mean it! You're hurting the heart in me——"

"I'm breaking my own," she said simply, and tears welled into her eyes. An instant later they were hard and bright. "But I mean that!"

He talked to her for days after that, pleaded, reasoned, cajoled, bullied even, but there was no moving her.

The end came as suddenly as love had come. They were both distraught.

"It can't be, Marian," he told her. "Anything may happen. It's tempting Providence. Do you love me at all?"

"Do I love you?" She turned to him and her eyes glowed. "I love you with my whole heart and soul."

"And Marian! Are you going to put your purpose above love?"

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

Anger rose in her like a red flame.

"I am," she decided, "if I were never to marry!"

He looked at her, simply. The blood had gone from his face and left it grey. Gusts of temper swept over her like a storm over waves.

"Never! Do you hear? Never!" She paced up and down the sitting-room with the swing of an enraged wolf. "Do you realize that I will be the greatest actress in the world? Am now? Shall I throw that away? Shall I endanger it?" She stopped before him suddenly. "My last word is no! and no! and no!" She tore her engagement-ring from her finger and threw it toward him. "If you don't like my terms, you can go. And you needn't come again until you do!"

"I don't like your terms," he said quietly.

The ring had rolled a little across the floor. In a sweeping torrent of rage she sprang toward it and crushed it beneath her heel. She threw the door open.

"Then go!"

In a sort of daze, which lasted from that moment until a month later, he packed his trunks, gathered his canvases, and came home. He did nothing desperate, but wandered about the sleepy West Virginia town, morose and moody. People thought it was overwork that had caused the change from his usual cheerfulness. They did all they could to divert him. And the principal of these was Jeannette Rann.

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

He had known her before he went to Paris, had known her when she was going to school. She was twenty-five now, nearly as old as Marian Long, but she seemed no more than a schoolgirl, so much life and spirits were in her. A small, athletic girl, with the fair hair and blue eyes of Saxon ancestry, with a smile that flashed out like a light, and a song on her lips that was as gay as any that ever came from a linnet's throat. She was tireless in her efforts to interest him, continually dragging him out for tennis, or a canoeing turn, or a dancing-party. She began with kindness and the warmth in her heart for anybody who seemed in trouble or depressed. But little by little there crept a light into her eyes and a shyness into her manner that Kane, absorbed as he was, could not fail to notice. The thing affected him. It gave him somehow a catch in the throat. In the end something impelled him to put out his hand.

"My little sweetheart," he said softly, "will you marry me?"

He had to ask her twice, but she did not answer. She held her head down, and her face was flaming. He drew her gently into his arms, and as he did so he noticed that she was fluttering with timidity, like a pigeon held in the hand.

They were married, and for ten years Leonard Kane never forgave himself for two things, and never will. The first was that he spoiled her life, and the

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

second that he does not love her. But Leonard Kane is wrong. They have gone through poverty, and they will feel want until the end of things, but her life has not been ruined. She is happy. She loves him and is content to suffer by his side, is proud of it, and supremely happy. As for loving her, Leonard Kane does that, although he does not know it. There is the love of comradeship, that fine and sturdy growth between man and woman. There is the violent smash of passion, antagonistic, flaming, swinging like a pendulum, never adjusted. And there is a third: a sense of loyalty and pride that a woman has for a man, and his sense of protection for and indebtedness toward her. And this last was between Leonard Kane and his wife Jeannette.

Ten years went by in a muddy stream of poverty and disillusion. From the day on which he had parted from Marian Long his talent was dead. Not that he could not paint, but the things he painted were lifeless, spiritless things that no one wanted. They had drifted down until he was forced to take the smallest and least dignified work in order to keep life and soul together, minor church decorations, the reproduction of pictures better than which he himself could paint. But the shock of his parting from Marian Long had killed his genius as a blow on the head might rob a man of his sight.

And through all that ten years Jeannette had never uttered a word of protest against their poverty. She

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

was ever smiling, ever gay. Each new descent into want she treated as in the nature of an adventure.

"Listen," she would argue with him, her eyes shining, and her eyebrows lifted quizzically, "it will be all right. Don't worry, man, it will turn out all right."

"My dear," he would tell her gently—he was always gentle with her—"I brought you into this mess. If I hadn't married you——"

"If you say that," her voice would break a little, "if you say that I shall cry!"

She never heard of Marian Long. She never knew that there had been a love venture in his life before he had married, and not for the world would he have let her know. But always, in the back of his consciousness, there remained the memory of Marian Long. It haunted him, as the thought of some black sin might haunt the days of an expiating monk. It terrified him, as a terror of childhood might last through a man's whole life. It seduced him, as the wiles of the Serpent of Old Nile seduced the great triumvir of Rome. In him, over him, about him, was the pernicious remembrance of Marian Long.

And Marian Long was back!

For three days she had been sitting to him now, and gradually under his brush the portrait was taking on life and colour. Already, out from the canvas,

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

the imperious black head stood like a challenge, the magnificent black eyes flashed imperiously, the tall, slim form shimmered upward like the stalk of some exotic flower.

She had found him out, and she had come to him. She knew her own magnetism and her own strength.

"Len," she had said, "it's ten years ago, but we can be friends."

"Why not?" he had answered with a sort of flippancy.

They stood watching each other's face for an instant, and there was no forgetfulness in either, but a dull sort of tragical pain. They were both silent. She was the first to turn away. She came back briskly and smilingly.

"Len," she told him, "in those old days there was something you wanted to do. You wanted to paint my portrait. Will you do it now?"

"I don't think I can," he answered a little bitterly. "I'm afraid I overrated myself in those days. I haven't done a decent thing for five years. I think it would be beyond me."

"It won't," she said a little fiercely. "It will be good." He shook his head.

"You will do it, Len," she insisted with her old fire. "You will. You must!"

And he had fallen under her spell again, as he had fallen long ago in Paris. Some subtle, hypnotic



## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

influence emanated from her. It would be no harm, he thought, to see her again. Perhaps in seeing her the old malign influence would wear off, and he would be a free man. It was a shock this first time, but that might wear off. Surely it could not be as it was ten years ago. A little time, a few hours together, and he might laugh at the chain that had bound him. He would arise, like Prometheus unbound. Yes, he would see her again. There would be no treachery to Jeannette in that.

"You will do it?" she asked.

"I'll try," he agreed.

And for three days now she had been coming to the barren studio on Twenty-third Street, and they had been very silent together. With careful casualness as though they were acquaintances of long standing who had no more use for speech or courtesy, she came in, took the pose against the white-silk background he had put up for her, and he painted her with bold, unerring strokes. He could nearly hear her willing in her mind: "I love you. I have always loved you. I love you now!" And his own brain whirlingly answered: "I love you. I love you, but I must not. I love you, but I shall not," again and again.

And beneath his eyes, on the canvas, a miracle was happening. The picture was taking shape and colour such as he had not believed possible. He was painting better than he had ever painted in the days

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

in Paris when he had been acclaimed a genius. It was not a material matter of pigment and canvas. It was a spirit caught alive. Even in the half-finished head the chiselled lips breathed, the imperious eyes flashed, the nostrils quivered faintly. A great fire consumed him. He was savage when the moment came for him to stop. And in an instant he was aloof and cold as ever.

"You will come to-morrow morning," he would say, controlling his voice.

"Yes," she would answer, as off-hand as he, carefully averting her eyes. "To-morrow morning." He was so excited at home that Jeannette grew worried about him.

"There's nothing wrong, man?" she would inquire in her gentle way. "You're not sickening for anything, are you?"

"Oh, nothing at all," he would laugh uneasily. But a troubled look came into her eyes.

He had finished the hands on the fifth day, those thin, long, transparent hands that were like ivory spatula, and he had left the work stunned, so great did it seem to him. More and more did the vague background edge away, and stronger and more vital and more human the figure stood forth. He had caught the electric quality of her—the passionate, dominating force, the conquering and savage will. The actress had seen the look of awe in his eyes as she watched his work.

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

"I want to see," she demanded.

"You can't," he told her brutally, "not until it's finished."

He went home exhausted. At the threshold Jeannette, excited, drew him in.

"Listen, man," she told him, her eyes shining. "I've got something—two theatre tickets. Mrs. Langdon was going out of town and couldn't use them. You've been overworking, and you need something to cheer you up. So we're going alone. And guess what they're for?"

"I can't guess." He smiled, in spite of himself, at the happiness in her eyes.

"They're for Marian Long, the great actress, in *Romeo and Juliet*."

He started back abruptly—afraid, shocked, as though someone had accused him to his face of infidelity and deception.

"I can't go," he said roughly.

She didn't plead for a minute. She turned away and the happy eyes filled with tears. The joy went from her face like the light from a snuffed candle.

"Oh, man!" she said, after a minute, chokingly, "I wanted it so much for you!"

A cold sweat had nearly broken out on him. How terrible it seemed. She wanted to bring him to see the woman who was trying to break up her home, to rob her of her husband. She wanted to sit there

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

with him and enjoy the spectacle of this woman's cold-blooded triumph over the public. If Jeannette only knew——

She was weeping softly, pitiably, like a child.

"I had prepared dinner, man," she said, "a great dinner for you—and a supper after the theatre when we came home. I've been holding the tickets for a week. I wanted to take you out of yourself, man. Oh, man! Why?"

His heart melted at the sight of her. After all, what did his suffering matter compared to her disappointment? The three hours of agony sitting there, what were they compared to the pain she would feel one of these days——

"I'll go, Jeannette," he decided.

He remembers that evening only by one stab—the moment that Marian Long recognised him. Before that all was joy. Before that his mind and spirit were moving about in a panic, like a rabbit caught in its own warren between a trap and a ferret. He noticed her coming on the stage in a vague way, saying her lines, and moving off. It was only in this moment that he noticed her black eyes dilate at the sight of him in the second row that he came to himself with a shock, as though he had received a stinging blow in the face. Into the woman's voice there crept a throbbing tenseness of passion as she threw her head back in soliloquy:

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

*Give me my Romeo, and when he shall die  
Take him and cut him into little stars.  
And he shall make the face of Heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night  
And pay no worship to the garish sun!*

His wife's hand crept into his, and in sudden terror he turned to look at her. Even in the dim gloom of the theatre he could see her eyes shining and the rapt look that the ringing words had called into her face. She turned to him.

"Dear man! dear man!" she whispered.

And after that, fog again in his heart, his brain whirring like a weaver's shuttle, revolving like a whirligig—and dumb prayers to an unknown god to strike him dead where he sat, and finish the thing decently, instead of with sordidness and shame.

He remembered the next morning, though, when he arrived hot-foot at the studio to finish the picture in a frenzy of work. A note was in the box:

*Sorry, but cannot keep appointment to-day. Will come to-morrow. Marian.*

"The selfish beast!" he told himself savagely. "Selfish as ever! Same old Marian Long!"

What could it be? he asked himself bitterly. Some fitting with a modiste, or petty point of

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

rehearsal. Could she not see how frenzied he was to finish the portrait! How much it meant to him! And calmly, without a word of explanation! He called up her apartment.

"I want to speak to Miss Long. I am Leonard Kane."

"I'm afraid you can't, Mr. Kane," her maid answered. "Miss Long was tired last night, and decided she would sleep this morning."

So that was it, he muttered furiously. Because she felt tired, she put a brake on the wheels of his work. She wanted sleep, God bless the mark! And wasn't there somewhere the mention of men who could not keep watch with their Master one hour——

And this was the woman he loved with his heart and soul, who had conquered and abased him. This was the woman who had filled his mind bitterly for more than ten years, who had sought him out, who had pleaded with him to make a mighty effort to regain genius, and for an hour's sleep she had neglected him in the midst of it! And yet he would follow this woman for ever, surely as the tides sway to the moon; would abide with her for ever; would give up home and wife for her! . . .

His mind went back subconsciously, involuntarily, to his wife, and he remembered her unselfishness toward him. There was the time he was engaged on a picture of which he expected great things, a



## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

titanic struggle to regain his old position. They had come to the end of their money and he was going to postpone the painting.

"Indeed you won't," Jeannette had told him. "Listen," and she unfolded to him her plan of going as a waitress for a few weeks into a restaurant. "I'll make enough money for four, much less two. You'll need a wheelbarrow to bring home the tips I'll get—nickels and dimes, quarters——"

"Jeannette!" he had cried out, horrified, but she got her own way, as she always did. He had worked like a fiend on the landscape to justify the sacrilege. It had failed—a beautiful piece of colour and technique, but life was wanting. And yet she had nothing but comfort for his disappointment.

"Dear man!" she told him. "It will come. It must! Don't be discouraged. And as for the waiting, darling, it was the fun of the world!"

He thrust the thought of his wife out of his mind brutally, as one might thrust a friend away from the scene of one's own disgrace.

She came next morning, slim, beautiful, imperious, with no apology for or no explanation of her yesterday's defection. He asked no explanation of it, but went ahead painting, palette on thumb, brushes in hand, now making a stroke as decisive as a blow, now a touch as delicate as a surgeon's, now stepping back and observing, with slitted eyes, a tint of

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

colouring or a line of shadows. Suddenly she broke in.

"Why don't you come and see me act, Leonard?"

He mumbled an unintelligible answer.

"You have never seen me act?"

"No," he answered casually.

"You lie, Leonard. You were there Tuesday night. I saw you.

"Was that your wife beside you?" she questioned inexorably. "The little fair-haired woman?"

He refused again to answer, but she read the truth in his face.

"Oh, Len! Oh, Len!" she cried out bitterly, and there was in her voice the same piercing tone he had heard when she noticed the shabbiness of his overcoat—the tone of one who observes degradation in a friend.

He went on painting, his face flaming with a sort of shamed shame. From the wall where she posed he could hear her sigh deeply. She stepped back.

"The portrait is almost finished," he said. "You can see it now."

She came quickly forward and stepped in front of it. He watched her for an instant, waiting for the cold, critical expression of her eyes, the careful balancing of values that she never was without. She knew pictures, did Marian Long, and she knew art. Her opinion was worth while. But no appraising shrewdness showed in her face. A startled surprise

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

flashed into it. The pupils dilated. The mouth opened.

"My God!" she exclaimed.

"It's not all finished yet," Kane forced himself to say calmly. "A few lights here and there in the background. I'll fix them up in the morning, then it will be done."

"My God!" she repeated. "Leonard Kane!"

She turned to him, her expression dazed. A great flood of wonder surged into her eyes.

"My God!" again she whispered. "You are the greatest painter in the world!"

He said nothing to that, for he knew it was true. He looked at the portrait steadily by her side.

"No more poverty for you, Lennie," she was saying exultantly. "Riches and fame and power and everything henceforth."

She turned with a quick dramatic gesture.

"And I helped you to that! I! I!"

He turned to her and looked into her shining face.

"Marian!" he called to her, his arms out. She threw her cloak about her.

"No! No!" She put out her hand. "Tomorrow I will come, when everything is finished."

She stood in the doorway for an instant—tall, imperious, striking as the portrait itself.

"Leonard Kane!" she murmured.

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

Back came his voice, vibrant, triumphant!

"Marian Long!"

So there! He put the palette and brush down. It was finished. He stood back and regarded it exultantly. Let them come and see! Let them criticize. Titian could not have done that hand, nor Zuloaga that imperious poise of head. Let Sargent see the pose of that body and Melchers the firm, effective background. When people asked what had become of Leonard Kane, here was the answer—a greater, a stronger Leonard Kane was alive and here was his work.

Nine o'clock! She would not be here for an hour yet. A great impatience seized him. He wanted her to be here, and to tell her that he loved her more strongly than in the old days, and to hear her tell him she loved him still. That was what she would tell him this morning. He had seen it in her eyes yesterday. The long and bitter years would be as nothing. Their memory would be wiped away in a vast explosion of love, and they would be together forever.

"And they were married," he quoted to himself in ecstasy, "and lived happy ever after!"

Across the vision of the rosy future—the happiness, success, riches and fame—there ran one streak of misery, the thought of Jeannette. What would she do? What would she say? It was better for

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

her to be loosed from him, the worthless failure, and to marry later someone who would appreciate her and give her everything he had failed to. And if Jeannette would take it, she could have anything of his she wished—money, jewels, settlement, anything! But would Jeannette take them? . . .

"At any rate, it's got to go on," he told himself savagely.

For this was love, and nothing should stand in the way of it! Kings had thrown away crowns for it, and queens had died of it. This was the terrible, immortal thing that many waters could not quench nor floods drown. A brutal, rapacious passion——

The telephone jangled. He took the receiver from the hook.

"Listen, man. This is Jeannette!"

"Jeannette!"

"Listen," she said excitedly. "I want you to meet me at two o'clock to-day, outside Berghoff's. That coat of yours is terrible, and I've been saving up for two months to buy you a new one. Listen, man, I've got twenty-five dollars—the butcher and grocer are our deadly enemies for life, but I've got it, and you're going to have a coat——

"Jeannette!" he blurted out.

"I won't discuss it, man. I won't hear any arguments. I'm hanging up. Berghoff's at two."

## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

He hung up slowly, and standing, he began unconsciously to wipe off the little drops of sweat already forming on his forehead. He began pacing the studio with short, jerky steps, whistling without time, without melody. He looked out of the window aimlessly.

"There's an end of you, Marian Long!" he said to himself.

He took up his palette knife and walked toward the portrait. Slowly and deliberately he drew the knife from top to bottom. The canvas tore in a strident, ripping whine. He drew the knife methodically from right to left and from left to right, until there was nothing left but a frill of tatters hanging to a wooden frame.

"There's my answer to you, Marian Long!" he muttered.

He watched the poor, ruined thing for a minute. There was an end of him, too, he knew. Never again would his hand operate with cunning, nor his mind with fire. Again for him, and for all days, too, the eternal drudgery of hard work—the church decorations, the cheap friezes, the reproduction of pictures by men whose better and leader he could have been.

"Ah, well!" he said resignedly.

He left the door open so that she might enter the studio and see his answer to her. She would understand, he knew, and he smiled to himself at the



## THE PORTRAIT OF MARIAN LONG

thought of her rage, for her pride was as great as her selfishness. And slowly he went down the stairs on his way to the museum, to paint for the forty dollars the pot-bellied dentist had offered him a reproduction of that garish explosive thing of Zuloaga's—Anita Ramirez on a yellow couch!

## VII

### THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

It was in the Martinelli that Lane first met Rah Mir Bey—in the long, white bar-room that suggests a church. Gregg, the insurance man, had Rah Mir with him.

"Lane," he announced in that irritating salesman manner of his, "I want you to meet Rah Mir Bey, my Turkish friend. Rah Mir Bey, Lane, is an Arab chief in his own country, Samaria, in Asia Minor, and he's a lineal descendant of the Prophet's sister. That's going some." He paused for breath and plunged ahead. "Rah Mir, this is Eugene Lane, the shrewdest man that Wall Street ever produced. He's going to be worth ten million some day. Yes, sir."

"Glad to know you," said Lane, shifting his cigar and shooting out a feline right hand.

"How do you do?" nodded Rah Mir.

And as they sat down together in that easy companionship of bars, Lane felt the spell of Rah Mir Bey weaving itself about him like a subtle Eastern perfume. The mere appearance of Rah Mir was sufficient for that, with his long, lean Arab's body,

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

and his high-cheeked Arab's face, aquiline like the face of a king on a coin, clean-nostrilled, black-eyed, heavy-jowled. In spite of his Poole clothes and his clipped European accent, he seemed an embodiment of Asia—a vague perfume of adventure hung about him, an emanation, as it were, of Romance.

"Rah Mir," said Gregg, "is returning from a trip to the West. On account of the war, the Turkish authorities have refused him admission home. He belongs to one of the disaffected tribes in Palestine, and they won't trust him back. He's got to remain in America for the present, and he's remaining with me over the week-end."

"They won't let me back, that's certain," laughed Rah Mir.

Which was very far from being true, because in Constantinople, as in Berlin and in Vienna, they were very eager for the return of Rah Mir. In Berlin and in Vienna police officials are reticent to the point of churlishness, but in Constantinople the chief of service is loquacious to a degree. He will preface his account of Rah Mir's delinquencies with the statement that he is the descendant of improper and verminous ancestry and—the supreme Moslem insult—the brother of a disreputable sister. He will hope impiously that pigs will desecrate Rah Mir's grave. He will charge him with crimes of exceeding gravity; the murder of two Hindu merchants over a matter of cards; the disappearance of the jewels of Hamil

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

Pasha of Beirut, and the marital difficulties of Djelal Bey. There is also a suspicion of highway robbery on the pilgrims to Mecca, and the finessing of a Circassian prince out of a year's revenue for a bundle of worthless paper alleged to be Russian bonds.

These matters are not extremely grave in Stamboul—under certain circumstances the murder of Hindu chapmen is an act of religious merit, and the case of the Circassian prince was a moral teaching against credulity—but in Berlin and Vienna things are different. They have no sense of humour in regarding crime. Of what Rah Mir was guilty in those capitals the police have kept to themselves. Undoubtedly they were gainful crimes, the rooking of credulous and rich pigeons whom his Oriental flavour and notable lineage had caught in a snare. Perhaps, too, he had used that knife of his.

There was a myth once in Europe that the streets of America were paved with gold. There is a second and not less extraordinary one among the criminal classes that America is a thieves' paradise, that garotters garotte at the street corners and that the gold-brick salesman exercises his functions in the broad daylight under the unsuspecting noses of the police. Every brand of European and Asiatic criminal resorts here for shelter when the deluge comes at home. Rah Mir, whose business was a high-class one, came, just as the dub burglar and the bungling murderer come, and be this said, that

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

prospects were bright, at that precise moment, in the Martinelli bar.

"It's been the dream of my life to go to the East," Lane mused with far-away eyes. "'Somewhere east of Suez.' By George, some day when I get a little money together I'm going to take a rest and see the world. Yes, by George!"

"It's the only thing in the world," said Rah Mir with warm sincerity. "To be going forward to meet the rising sun. To stay at home continually is to be like a worm in a garden."

"By George! You're right," said Gregg.

"How do you like America and Americans?" Lane asked with a smile.

"I like America," Rah Mir nodded, "and I ought to like Americans. One of them saved my life in the worst hole I ever got into."

"What was that?" Gregg asked, intently curious.

"Oh, nothing," the Arab laughed.

"Come on, tell us," Gregg urged.

"Nothing very much to my credit," the Arab chuckled. "Fact is, I was gun-running into East Africa—a little matter of holy war we were stirring up. I had just carried a hundred Krags—bought 'em in Manila—across to Uganda to distribute among the Nyassas, and was getting across the border into German East Africa when the patrol headed me off—some of the Nyassas, the descendants of wart-hogs and vicious she-camels!—had passed the word to the

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

Government. I had fever too, O Allah! the thing that shakes you like an electric machine, and I was seeing things, ghosts, black African ghosts, all through that rotten yellow jungle.

"The Portuguese were a bit too eager—they shouted before they shot, and I got two of them with a Rigby express—good shooting for fever. I doubled and went back—I didn't care how. I passed a bull hippo without looking at him, and took a chance on crawling through fer-de-lances and centipedes. I swam across a river, and kicked a crocodile in the snout. And, oh my hat! the rotten red-hot sun and the rotten dead smells!

"I didn't care much about their killing me—I was too far gone for that. But they don't kill you for gun-running, at least not for a while. They crucify you with stakes on the sand outside the town. They put water where you can see it, and they smear you with honey for the ants, and there are flies as big as humming-birds and ants as large as cockroaches and other horrible things that crawl and fly. And the sun is like a red-hot iron in your eyes. If Allah is good, you die in a day—but sometimes Allah is more just than merciful. . . .

"About three hours later I got into the camp of this American I'm talking about—I can't remember his name, I never could—I had fever too bad. He was hunting ivory—poaching, I know, but he had greased his way along. He pitched me in a corner



## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

of his camp and threw a *djibbah* over me. The patrol came. Gad! I nearly screamed when they entered the camp.

“‘I’ve seen no one,’ he told the Portuguese lieutenant, ‘and there’s no one here except M’Gala and M’Kigi, my boys,’ and he pointed to them, ‘and my partner, Carr, here, under the *djibbah*. Go over and have a look at him. Go on, do your duty. Don’t mind,’ he urged them. I felt for my knife and was getting ready to cut my throat.

“‘Only,’ he laughed, and I could hear him scratch a match on his buckram trousers, ‘don’t blame me if he gets mad with you for waking him, and smashes your nose and blackens your eyes, and puts every tooth in your head down your throat. He’s got a touch of fever and is apt to do a thing like that. Carr’s got a temper!’”

“‘Oh, there’s no need to look,’ the lieutenant laughed.

“‘Oh, look by all means,’ the American laughed back. But they didn’t and they went away. He got me over to the German border and said good-bye.

“‘Don’t thank me,’ he said. ‘It’s only a loan. Pass it along to the next poor devil in a hole. Good-bye.’ I wish I could remember his name—wish I could remember it, dash it!”

“Fine chap,” Gregg commented patronizingly. He looked at Lane, “We’ve got to be tearing ourselves away, brother Lane,” said Gregg. “Say good-bye to our little Oriental friend here and let’s

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

hit the trail. He and I have got to be home for dinner at seven."

"Why don't you come up and stay a little while with us, Mr. Rah Mir," Lane urged. "If you're going to be in the city. Come up and stay for a week at our place in Westchester. Two weeks. A month. Glad to have you."

"I should like to very much," said Rah Mir modestly.

"Fine," Lane purred with satisfaction. "Make a date right now. Make it next Saturday. I'll call for you with the car."

"Sure I won't be putting you about?"

"Putting us about! That's good. What do you say, Gregg?"

"Put him about! He'll be proud to have you. Don't forget to tell him about the time you played chess with the Shah of Persia."

They swung out with a running fire of farewells, through the swing door into Broadway. They stopped for a moment before plunging into the maelstrom of traffic that swirled about Thirty-fourth Street.

"What are you smiling at?" asked Gregg.

"Nothing," smiled Rah Mir Bey naïvely. "Nothing. I was only thinking how much I liked your friend, Mr. Lane."

And so, after many days of preparation, Rah Mir Bey, the sheikh and the son of a sheikh, was intro-

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

duced to the Lane home in Westchester. Lane showed him the spacious Colonial house, the strip of wooded plantation, the too-neat garden and the too-large lawn. He brought in Pilar Lane.

"You have seen my house and my car, and my two dogs," he said, "here is my wife."

Very gallantly Rah Mir Bey bent over her hand and kissed it.

"It is written," he quoted, "'A woman is a jewel and a beautiful wife is a king's crown.'" And Pilar Lane's lip curled.

"You make yourself comfortable," Lane urged with his large generosity. "You might as well, because you're going to be a prisoner here. We're not going to let you get away."

It took Rah Mir Bey very little time to understand the psychology of Eugene Lane. A good deal was evident on the surface. You might have liked Lane from the back, so straight and upstanding was he, and so finely poised his yellow head. You might have liked him from the chin downwards, with his powerful chest and sinewy thews. But you could never have liked his face. A massive jaw, like a flat-iron; a pair of steely, granite, frost-like grey eyes that regarded you insultingly, suspiciously, confidently; a pair of thin lips that opened to show you teeth like wolf's fangs, white and clean and long—the man was a human cat, a treacherous, cruel, and powerful cat.

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

With one keen, intuitive stroke Rah Mir got to the heart of the matter. He understood why he was there, why the man treated his wife as a slave-master might, why he doled out charity, why he entertained. It was because he liked to have people dependent on him. It fed his vanity. He liked to feel that the descendant of the Prophet was in his house. He liked to hang a costly gown on his wife and refuse her a spending dollar on the days she visited town. The servants in the house were cowed and his wife went about silent and heavy.

"Bah, the swine, and the descendant of a thousand and extremely filthy he-pigs," said Rah Mir to himself. But his criticism he kept severely to himself. There is an analect of Confucius which states that the superior man cultivates wisdom and greets his enemies with a smile. And Rah Mir was a superior man.

But Pilar Lane was another matter. He thoroughly disliked her, because she thoroughly disliked him. And Rah Mir had little use for women who didn't like him, who were few. The vague perfume of the East, the spring wind of adventure, the hint of scented lotus lands where Scheherazade told one thousand and one tales to her despondent bridegroom—all drew women to Rah Mir as iron filings are by magnetism attracted to a piece of metal bent like a horseshoe. His dislike of her began the first night, when he overheard her speaking to her hus-

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

band about him on the dark verandah of the house. They were many honourable conventions to which Rah Mir subscribed, but he could not afford, in his business, to allow any gratuitous information to pass him by. So he listened.

"I don't like your new friend," she told her husband, in her quiet, convinced voice.

"Eh? Why not?" he snapped at her.

"Since you ask," she replied, "I think he's insincere, treacherous, dangerous, and has made your acquaintance with some underhand motive. I don't like him and I'm a little afraid."

"Bah," Lane laughed. "What do you know about men? He's all right. I like to have him here. He's going to stay here, and that ends it. Even if he is a crook, he'll have to go far and learn a lot more before he can put anything over on me."

"Very well," she said resignedly.

"She's got brains," Rah Mir reflected as he walked to his room. "But confound her for the unpleasant offspring of unpleasant parents! I've got to be careful."

A day became a week and a week passed into a month, and a second month came, and Rah Mir was still with them. Westchester became a symphony in red and yellow. The leaves of the chestnut trees began falling. Frosty roads and nights of innumerable stars. He was fast becoming a member of the family—even though Pilar Lane disliked him

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

and he hated her. Lane himself became so friendly as to show a little contempt for him. The broker knew that Rah Mir was penniless, and it's hard to be cordial and respectful toward a guest for whom you have to buy cigarettes and tooth-powder. He would not have parted with the Arab under any circumstances until the time when he had extracted all the amusement and credit possible from housing him. He contracted the habit of taking him around to show friends, as one takes around a prize dog, and of bidding him relate this or that story or occurrence, as a hired performer is told to go ahead and sing at a dinner-party.

"This is Rah Mir Bey," he would introduce him, and give his titles, lineage and history of his life. "Say, Rah Mir, go ahead and tell them about Arabia, where the coffee comes from. First of all, get me that packet of cigarettes from the mantelpiece, like a good fellow. Thanks. Now go ahead."

And Rah Mir would comply pleasantly, keeping his hands in his pockets, so that the white flash of his knuckles through the brown skin would not betray his disgust and anger.

In those two months he had sufficient opportunity to study Pilar Lane, though she hardly spoke a word to him, moving through the house like an automaton, so dead was the spirit within her. Eight years ago, before she had met and married Eugene Lane, she had been a very beautiful woman, of



## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

that rose-like, blooming-cheeked Spanish type that Texas knows. She still looked, with the fine flush of her cheeks, and her wealth of black hair, and her slimness, like a splendid rose, but a rose which was drooping and fading because planted in the corner of a garden where the sun came rarely. A fire that had gone out, a flower that the frost had stricken, Pilar Lane was that. Dumbly she went about the house, dumbly she sat at table, dumbly she lived. There was nothing left to her but dignity, and the shadow of beauty and the wisdom that comes to a woman after eight unhappy years.

She saw through her husband, she saw through his friends; she saw through Rah Mir Bey, the Samaritan, as clearly as though she were using a spiritual X-ray. And Rah Mir grew restive under it, and began hating her with a deep, suppurating hatred.

"I've got to get away from here. I can't stand this much longer," said Rah Mir Bey.

There is this much to be said for Rah Mir Bey: that he had no ingrained criminal instinct. He would never have committed a crime, outside a few cases where anger and pique entered as factors, were it not a case of necessity. He wanted money. He was born with the tastes of an aristocrat and a pauper's purse. If, instead of being the guest of Eugene Lane, who was only interested in him as an *objet d'art*, he had been in the house of one who

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

warmly liked him and who would have kept him for an indefinite period, Rah Mir would have left, pouring many flowering Oriental blessings on his host. But with Lane, well! he would live with him as long as he could and leave with sufficient funds to get along until he could find another easy mark. How he would get the money was a matter of indifference—sometimes he would have it placed in schemes more elaborate and deadly than, even if transparent as the device of the Spanish prisoner—to search for hidden treasures of pearls in the Indian Ocean; to raid the Monasteries of Mount Athos; and if those failed, there was the Kukri knife, crooked, keen as a razor, which was about him in morning dress, in evening clothes, in a sack suit, as close a companion as his well-thumbed Mohammedan rosary.

“A clean weapon,” he would tell himself with pride, “the weapon of a gentleman.” And he would pat his sock where it fitted snug in its oiled sheath.

And little by little as he lived there he heard the story of Pilar Lane, sometimes from the mouth of a loquacious servant, oftentimes from Lane himself—queer, distorted, shaded, and punctuated by the broker’s raucous laugh. He heard of her impoverished, unlucky home in Texas, on an *estancia* bounded on one side by the Rio Grande. He heard of how the estate had gone swiftly to the devil through the drunkenness of her father—an honourable, upright old gentleman, who of all the faults

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

and vices on the human calendar possessed only these two, drunkenness and impracticability. The legend of bad luck pursued that family like a Nemesis. And to escape it, Pilar had married Eugene Lane, in whom, eight years before, only the intense magnetism had come to the surface. The hardness, cruelty and intense egotism had come only with success. Rah Mir could understand that.

"Evil festers like a boil," he remarked to himself sagely; "body becomes a great sore through a little red blot on a white skin. Even so."

He hears more tales of the bad luck. He heard, too, how through a misunderstanding that was never remedied, Pilar's brother, "Captain Larrie," had been broken from the army in the Philippines—a tale of petty intrigue and vicious jealousy which "Captain Larrie" had been too sensitive and decent a man to fight. He heard how the Texan, broken-hearted at being disgraced in the profession he loved, had wandered up and down the China coast, dissipating, gambling, until he had become one of the tragic flotsam and jetsam on the shore of the world. He knew that Captain Larrie was a professional gambler, barred by the police of three Continental nations, kept out of the Riviera for fighting a fatal duel, in which he took it upon himself to defend the name of an American governess whom he had never seen—ill-luck always after him like a dog on the heels of a hare. And he knew of Lane's unrestrained con-

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

tempt for the broken man and of his wife Pilar's poignant love for him.

One day he looked at the only photograph of Captain Larrie the house possessed—a little faded lad in his cadet's uniform of grey, busby held proudly to shoulder, and left hand on sword hilt. Rah Mir studied it intently.

"It reminds me in a queer way of a man I once met," Rah Mir said in a puzzled way.

"Indeed," said she coldly, and turned away. And the conversation ended.

"Oh, Lane's a damned scoundrel," thought Rah Mir, "and his wife's a damned fool to have married him. And I don't like scoundrels and I hate fools. Even so!"

She was feeling happy, for her, the day ill-luck played another cat-and-mouse game with her brother. She had been thinking over her unhappy life and trying to achieve resignation and thinking pathetically whether this ill-luck had power to dog her into the world of stars. She decided it had not, and she began singing a song and running over forgotten chords on the ostentatious piano. A maid knocked and entered.

"There's a boy at the back wants to see you, madam," she announced.

"To see me?" she queried in astonishment, but something cold began to settle on her heart.

"Yes, madam. He wants to see you and he wouldn't give his name. Shall I send him away?"

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

"No wait. I'll see him," she said quickly.

She flew through the house with steps quickened by fright. In the rear she found what she somehow expected—a wizened, pinched, stable-boy of nineteen who still looked like a child, with his jockey's build and big eyes. She knew him at once for the boy whom Captain Larrie had picked up in Australia and who had followed the gambler like a tamed hound ever since, sharing prosperity and misfortune gratefully.

"What is it?" she asked. Her hand went to her bosom. "Is he dead?"

"He's all right, ma'am," the lad stuttered, "but he's in trouble."

"What is it, quick?" she demanded. "Don't keep me waiting!"

"Trouble," the boy answered doggedly, "and the police, and he has got to get away, and he can't."

"Oh!" she gasped. "Oh, poor Larrie! Wait, I'll go along."

"You can't," the messenger snapped. "You can't see him. He's just got to get away to China. Somebody's dead. It wasn't his fault, but they'll stick it on him. He's got to get away."

"To China, and somebody dead," she repeated dully. Her brain rose mechanically to the occasion. "He'll need a thousand. When and where?"

"To the hotel here," passing her a card. "And

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

to-morrow night. There's a freighter pulling out we can make."

"All right," she said simply. "He'll have it. Go back and tell him that, now."

The lad turned to go. He stopped for a moment and stammered.

"He sent you his——" and he left the sentence unfinished.

"I know," she said. A sudden rush of tears sent everything into a grey mist. She flew into the house again.

The bright afternoon became like a grey winter's day. She walked from room to room and from house to garden, unseeing, unhearing, with a cold grip of terror on her vitals. In fancy she saw Larrie—Larrie with the black hair and the black head and the pleading, winsome smile, standing erect and grey-faced in the bars of the prisoner's cage. She heard a patriarchal judge pronounce the death formula and saw the grim procession to the horrible chair. A thousand dollars stood between him and it—a thousand dollars, the price of a strumpet's ring. Where could she get it? The question ran around and around her head like a squirrel in a flying cage. Pawn something? Sell something? She had nothing that would bring that. She must ask Eugene. He wouldn't refuse it to her. He couldn't. It was impossible. Why, he even had the money in the house—a thousand dollars in yellow hundreds



## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

hidden in his library safe. He wouldn't do that, she told herself, fiercely, refuse her the price of her brother's life.

Evening came slowly, and lamps were lighted. Rah Mir, the Samaritan, came in from a long walk in the woods. Eugene Lane came, purring to the door in the great touring car. With his coming, fear gripped her in the knees, so that she could hardly walk. Dinner was served and they took their places mechanically. She sat in her chair eating like an automaton, wondering at herself for doing it. She thought of her brother hidden in his obscure hotel on Grand Street, waiting for relief while the trackers scoured the city up and down for him, and the conversation at the table jarred on her, like the rattle of carts at dawn.

"Well," Lane was saying, "I took a dollar out of my pocket and handed it to him. 'Go and get a good meal,' I said. 'Then have another look for work.' No matter what they say about me, I'm not bad at bottom. I like to help people."

"Indeed, no," Rah Mir crooned at him, "I think you're very generous."

"I want a thousand dollars," Pilar Lane broke in suddenly. Her voice quavered and panted as though she had been running. "I want a thousand dollars, Eugene. I want a thousand dollars."

Lane swung around and looked at her with raised eyebrows.

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

"You want a thousand dollars," he said incredulously. "You want—— Say, have you suddenly gone mad?"

"I haven't gone mad, Eugene," she answered, "and I want it."

"What do you want it for?"

"It's Larrie," she began brokenly. "Oh, I can't tell you here. I'll tell it to you alone. Only give it to me, will you, Eugene?"

"Tell me right here and now," Lane snapped.

"It's Larrie," she began again. "Poor Larrie. He's in trouble, Eugene. He has to get away. The police—you'll give it to me, won't you?"

"If that good-for-nothing brother of yours got himself into trouble," Lane sneered, "he can get himself out again. I won't give a cent."

"But Eugene," she began sobbing, "there's somebody dead and they'll kill Larrie in the chair. Now, don't you see?"

"I don't see," Lane thundered. "I won't give a cent. Meadows has broken the law. Let him suffer for it. It wouldn't be the first time he's broken it."

"Meadows," said Rah Mir suddenly, his eye glinting, "did you say Meadows?"

"Yes, Meadows," Lane answered, "Larrie Meadows. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing," the Arab drawled indolently, but his eyes were closed and his shoulders hunched

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

with tenseness. "No reason at all. Queer name, isn't it? Sorry to interrupt."

"But listen, Eugene," Pilar stammered, "you can't refuse it. You can't do that. You can't, man."

"I'm doing it, though," he snapped. His head jerked decisively.

She drew herself up from her seat brokenly, as if she had received a mortal, physical wound. She leaned with both hands blindly on the back of her chair for support. Her face became bluish white, and her mouth sagged. Her eyes showed up dully against the ghastly colour, like two water holes in an expanse of white snow. Slowly, before their eyes, she pulled herself together into a semblance of tragic dignity.

"He is not guilty of this, Eugene," she said slowly.

"He is not guilty of this; you know it."

"He's a fool," Lane commented sardonically.

"I have not patience with him." He looked at Rah Mir, as if asking his opinion. Rah Mir shrugged his shoulders. "At any rate, I won't give a thousand dollars," Lane blazed. "I won't give one dollar. That finishes it."

"It doesn't finish it," his wife began. Colour flamed into her face like a sunset. "I want to remind you of something. You weren't always rich like this Eugene. Do you remember a day when you were poor, when I stood by you when there wasn't a penny in your pocket, and when everybody was

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

against you? Do you remember that Christmas when you could do nothing and I worked in the store? Do you remember how I slaved afterward?"

"That's enough," Lane roared.

"It's not enough. I've worked for you; slaved for you; denied myself children for you; suffered hell at your hands for eight years, and said nothing; being true to you. And now you refuse me the price of poor Larrie's life."

"I do. You're ridiculous," Lane barked at her.

She straightened slowly and her hands fell to her sides. Her mouth quivered again, and her arms were trembling.

"Oh, poor, poor Larrie," she sobbed.

She turned to leave the room, and as she moved she saw the Arab's mouth twist into a wry, cynical smile.

"Oh! How I hate you," she flamed at him.

And as she tore the door open, she saw, in the glass of the buffet, the shoulders of Rah Mir lift in his customary nonchalant shrug.

She must have remained for hours in her room, sitting there in the dark looking out of her window, only faintly conscious. A little crescent of a moon, like a harvester's sickle, showed coldly luminous in a sea-blue sky. About everything was the silence of coming winter—except for the howling of a dog somewhere—and so bright was it outside that she could nearly see the frost crystals forming on the

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

trees. Faintly she could hear, as across definite time and space, the noises in the drawing-room—the vibrating voice of her husband, and the crash of the Arab's fingers on the piano and his high fluting tenor tones raised in a Viennese love-song. A neighbour came in and went, in a boisterous chorus of greeting and farewell. Eleven o'clock rang in ringing strokes from her table clock. Her husband came tramping upstairs followed by Rah Mir. A curt good-night from both, and their doors slammed. In the next room she could hear Lane tramping about undressing. She put her ear to the wall.

"A thousand dollars!" she could hear him laugh to himself. "The nerve of her! The fool!"

She waited, crouched against the wall, until she heard the plunge of his heavy body into the bed, and then a little while. Very softly she rose and caught her cloak up, and tiptoeing into the corridor, slipped toward the stairs. The house was dark everywhere, except for the moonlight streaming through the window. She crept down the stairs and fled through the hall into the dark chasm of the library. She paused for a moment, calculating to an inch where every object was, so that she would jar against nothing. She closed the door and moved towards the switch, and snapped it up with a feeling of fear in her bosom—for everything had seemed safe until she thought of the light. In one corner stood the safe, green and massive. She hurried across, looking

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

over her shoulder with one hand on heart and knelt before it. Three turns to the left, she remembered, and stop at three—good, she had that!—one to the left and stop at two, back to nine, and open. Her teeth chattered. Her hand shook. Her heart thumped. It was open at last, and in the corner, in a janned pigeon-hole, was the money. She stretched out her hand and stopped for a moment, for the thought came to her that Lane might be standing behind, ready to drag her to her feet and strike her in the face. She looked up. No one there, thank God! Swiftly she took out the money and counted it—there was more than a thousand. Twelve, thirteen hundred. All the better, she said as she rose to go to the desk and pack and stamp and address it.

There! The package was made, and it looked all right. No one could suspect what was in it. She stamped and addressed it hurriedly, caught up her cloak and turned to go out. Two hundred yards to the pillar box and then back. What would happen after? It didn't matter, she told herself, it didn't matter. Larrie would be safe. They'd never get him now. And she—a soft mist of tears covered her eyes. She turned toward the door.

"Oh, dear Larrie!" she sobbed through her clenched teeth.

In the parallelogram of light from the library door, standing in bathrobe and pyjamas, Chinese



## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

sandals, and a cigarette in his mouth, his eyes closed to mere slits, was Rah Mir Bey. He was motionless, like a figure in bronze. A thin line of blue cigarette smoke curled about him, like incense about an idol. As he stood back in the hall, imperturbable, he looked like a messenger of Fate. What was he going to do? she asked herself. Call up her husband? Or hold her himself? His eyes told her nothing. She could not examine him; he was examining her.

"Oh-h-h," she moaned softly.

She would make a fight for it any way, she said to herself. After all this, to be baulked at the last! She moved towards the door in short, timid steps, looking at him fearfully all the time. Her eyes were haggard and bloodshot. Her mouth was open. She cowered against the lintel of the door like a dog afraid of the whip. A few more steps and she was in the passage, slipping past him, expecting his quick flashing grasp, or the hullo of his voice. But neither came. She edged her way quickly down the hall toward the door. He remained motionless, looking at her, the cigarette still in his hand. She fumbled for the handle, opened it, took one more look at the immobile figure and flashed on to the lawn. The night air struck her like a spray of cold water and she whipped through the moonlight like a frightened doe. Half conscious she came to the pillar box on the road, thrust the packet into it, and heard the lid fall with a light clang.

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

And then her sudden strength left her, like a snapped string. Falteringly through the moonlight she went back to the house, wondering what would be there to meet her.

She stole up the steps again and into the house. The light in the library was out and no one was stirring. There was no sound from Rah Mir's room, and from her husband's door she could hear the deep, rhythmical sound of his breathing. All was well until morning anyway.

"Pilar!" she heard thundered.

She woke with a start. Daylight poured through the windows. She remembered last night with a cold sense of terror.

"Pilar!" her husband roared again.

"What is it?" she asked, and she raised her head bravely, as a man lifts his head to face the firing squad.

"That cursed Arab!" he swore. "He's pilfered the money from the safe, and gone off, leaving his card there. Damn his impertinence! Curse him! You were right, the rotten scoundrel!"

"No, thank heaven! I was wrong!" she murmured. And she turned away before he could see the gratitude shining in her eyes.

Three days later Senator and Mrs. Robinson, of Arizona, slumming from the first cabin, met him in the steerage of the great transatlantic liner. He

## THE PARABLE OF THE BAD SAMARITAN

straightened his Poole waistcoat and waved a long brown hand eastward.

"Over there lies Arabia," he murmured. He recited a few lines in Persian.

"A sonnet of Labid's," he told Mrs. Robinson, "of Labid, the companion of kings. 'Though impoverished among an alien race,'" he translated, "'in my city a thousand white horsemen shall meet me, and a thousand lutes croon at my coming.'"

Mrs. Robinson caught the Senator's arm.

"Harry," she said, "you must invite him to be our guest for the rest of the voyage, and bring him aft."

"Very well," the Senator nodded. "I will."

And Rah Mir Bey, who was acute of hearing, winked maliciously at the second officer. The second officer replied with a scowl, for he had seen Rah Mir's like before.

## VIII

### THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

It was very dark in the pergola; the warm, deep darkness of a summer night when there would be no moon. Occasionally the man would draw deeply at his cigarette, and the luminous shadowy red would show their faces vaguely, both young and set and very grey. You got the impression of him, large-boned, regular-faced, fair as a Swede. Her profile showed sharply cut as in a silhouette, dark-haired, small-headed with a beautiful curving throat, her face pointed piquantly like the muzzle of a chocolate Pom—something irregular about it, like an orchid; exotic. Her voice came very tense:

"It's the only thing to do!"

"I suppose so," he agreed dully.

"It is," she went on. "Already they're gossiping about us. That rotten old woman, Mrs. Niederstemann, said that your marriage didn't help you—that you were drinking again. And she said she noticed something queer about me. I heard her on the veranda of the Country Club. She guessed," the girl's voice dropped shamefully, "that I was taking drugs. Ned, there's only one thing to do."

"I suppose so," he again agreed dully.

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

Behind them, away from the cliff, their big country house glowed with a soft glamour of lights like the kindly lights of home and human beings. Before them, on the Sound, there was nothing but darkness, and the masthead and port lights of some little vessel far out on the water that only intensified the black loneliness of the sea.

"We can't stop it," she went on; "and in another year, Ned, you'd be dead or in the gutter and I'd be dead or in some horrible sanatorium for life. And I don't want that to be your end, Ned," again that queer little dropping of voice, "or the end of the girl you married."

He threw the cigarette away, in a curving arc of red light. She felt he had his face between his hands. She wanted to come to him in an outburst of tenderness, but she was afraid of killing the great iron resolution.

"We'll just go out in the boat to-morrow morning and you can scuttle her. They'll say we were drowned out bathing in the morning. Everybody will think it's been an accident. It's a bad end, Ned, but it's clean. It's cleaner than the other."

Again there was that tense, hopeless silence.

"It's the only thing to do," she reiterated.

"I suppose so," he agreed dully.

At many clubs, and in many hotels, if you mention the name of Ned Milliken, you will be received

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

with unctuous, hypocritical, sophisticated smiles. "Oh yes, Ned Milliken," they seem to mean. "We know all about him." I don't suppose Ned Milliken, or Joan Milliken for that matter, cares whether they smile or not. But smiles of that kind make every two-fisted man want to smash the wearers clean in the mouth.

They are very righteous, the men who smile, and many of them are religious. But into their rigid rectitude there never enters the conception that a man may do wrong and do right again. And the religious of them seem to have forgotten the blessed apophthegm of the Ninety-and-nine.

But the thing that was wrong with Ned Milliken was not a matter for religion, nor a matter for even sportsmanship. It began sixty years ago when John De Courcy Milliken came out of England to hew out the fortune of a younger son. Having money with him in an imposing if not a vast quantity, somebody saw him first. He found himself possessor of a California ranch, which the owner guaranteed would grow anything from asparagus to alfalfa. There might also be gold in it.

"The reason I'm letting it go to you," said the owner, "is because I like you, and want to see you make a success. I don't want your money, or I wouldn't take it. I'm giving away the farm to you, at a price like that."

The farm would not grow one decent thing, not



## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

even a self-respecting weed, and the only gold in it was the clinking English sovereigns sunk in the purchase price. But, mightily chagrined, the former owner saw Milliken get on, for oil exploded from that place in a vast rushing torrent. It was no credit of Milliken's; it had to be pointed out to him. So, many times a millionaire, De Courcy Milliken decided to go home to Surrey.

But De Courcy Milliken never went home. While celebrating his godsend he married, absent-mindedly, Little Eva from a travelling *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. There is a certain section of English society into which one does not bring a bride who has been Little Eva in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It is very foolish and undemocratic, to be sure, but when one is descended from the Conqueror's lieutenants one is entitled to some small vagaries.

So Milliken did not return. He stayed with his bride in America where she was comfortable and uncriticized, but for ten years he led an uproarious and joyful life, from club to club and from bar to bar, and very soon he died of cirrhosis of the liver or something of the kind. He was a very joyful drinker and he begat Cyril De Courcy Milliken.

Cyril De Courcy Milliken grew up to man's estate, and followed in the footsteps of his parent. He was a good-natured, easy-going sort of man, who drank because he had friends around him who asked him to. From California he migrated to New

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

York, where he married Hester Van Anda, a thin acidulous woman with patroon blood.

There are some women in this world who, according to the Talmudic legend, are the natural children of Adam and Lilith, Queen of Demons, mixed up with the lawful brood of Eve. If there are such, then Hester Milliken was one of them. It seemed to be her whole existence's end to make life one hell upon earth for her easy-going spouse. She nagged him until he sought the unexacting companionship of bars, and when he returned she reviled him in a very ladylike, cutting patroon way. Very soon Cyril Milliken had no other relief in life than an exaltation and a false happiness. He was a morose drinker; and he begat Edward De Courcy Milliken; and he died.

As far back as he could remember, and that was very far back—as far back as the age of two—Ned Milliken had never heard a good word spoken of his father by his mother. "I cannot sufficiently regret the day I first met your father. He ruined my life," was her very brutal formula to her son. And toward him, too, she was acidulous, nagging, impatient. "Your father was a drunkard," she told the lad; "he disgraced me everywhere." Her lips compressed into a thin line, and there was a menace in her eye. "If ever, when you grow up——" she would hint.

And when he grew up what he did was to act

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

in every way contrary to her wishes, most especially in the matter of alcohol. When you utterly dislike a person, and God knows with what sufficient reason Ned Milliken disliked that travesty of a mother he was given, there is an unholy joy in acting contrary to his wishes. Besides, the boy had a fine loyalty to his father, whom he remembered as a blighted, disappointed man, and it horrified him to hear his mother speak in that way of the man she had promised to honour and love.

He drank while under his tutor's care. He was expelled from Groton. At college he was a scandal. His mother looked at him coldly. She seemed to draw a morbid enjoyment from the spectacle, as though she had chosen martyrdom and was savouring the sacrifice.

"What luck could I expect," she sneered, "when I married into such a family?"

And Hester Milliken, too, died, very aptly, of some disorder of the spleen. No one was tragically sorry. Not even her own relatives.

"Now watch Ned go altogether to the devil," they said.

If anything could have saved Ned Milliken from riding on horseback to the devil it would have been the death of that nagging, unmaternal woman, but already at twenty-seven he had gone too far for a quick pulling up, and the poison that had been stored up by his fathers for two generations

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

now fell on him with compound interest. There arrived in quick succession that ignominious scene at the Waldorf; the indiscretion at Bridgeport, and that final blow, the arrest for assault and battery, the trial and the retailed story in a weekly magazine of scandal.

"Why don't you quit?" a doctor asked him.

"I wish to heaven I could!"

"Will you do what I tell you?" he was asked. Eventually he went to a sanatorium for six months. In the end there was no longer reason for keeping him.

"Now listen, Ned," his medical attendant told him. "Don't expect any miracle to happen when you leave here. You can still drink. You've got to keep away from it yourself. Get your friends to help you."

"I have no friends," Milliken answered bitterly. He was right there. Sober, he had no friends.

"Get a job and work like a trooper."

"There's nobody would give me a job." And that also was true.

"He'll get married one of these days," the doctor remarked sagely, "and she'll take care of him all right. It'll be the making of him."

Because there was nothing else for him to do, or anywhere else to go, Milliken kept on frequenting his old haunts: theatres, restaurants, and cabarets. For another six months he stayed loyally true to his

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

new-found religion against alcohol, drinking weird and vapid temperance brews, while waiters and *maîtres d'hôtel* waited hourly for a fall from grace.

"He'll drop off again," they prophesied, with the hard experience of their calling. "They all do."

But they were wrong there. Not to their knowledge did he relapse. At length even the memory of his escapades and his degradations died away and he was looked on only as a crank with a weakness for ginger ale. Only the size of his tips made him tolerated in the best cabarets. And then he met Joan Lebody.

She swung out in Churchill's one night to the rhythm of a staccato, languorous Spanish-American dance. Her slim, lissom figure and her exquisite, exotic, irregular face would have made her fortune anywhere, but added to that she was a marvellous dancer. There was no undue display of limbs. There was just superb art. She danced passionately from the black hair of her to her twinkling red shoes. Broadway welcomed her riotously after the plump, quarter-clad, Hawaiian beauties of the winter before.

It was after seeing her for the fourth time that Ned Milliken summoned up enough courage to be introduced to her. He asked her to have supper with him. She looked him over calmly, the loosely-built figure and the blond head, inheritances from

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

his Anglo-Saxon ancestry. She approved of him, but still——

“Why do you want me to?”

“Because,” he told her frankly, “I’m very lonely and you seem to me to be very lonely, too.”

There sprang up between them a queer relationship, a drawing together, as it were, for mutual protection. Every minute she could spare she gave him, and when he was left alone he felt a horrible sinking fear, as of a person deserted at sea.

“Why do you do this, in a cabaret?” he asked her bluntly. “You’re a lady.”

“Because I have to,” she said. “Once I thought I might make a career of it, but now——” and she laughed pathetically.

She told him of her life before he met her, of her father, John Lebady, an American planter of Porto Rico, who had been ruined; of her coming to New York on his death to make a career for herself in dancing; of her first engagement as a solo dancer in a Spanish fantasy. She held the job for three months.

“Then I had a nervous breakdown,” she told him with a quaver in her voice. “and the sanatorium ate up all my money. When I came out they remembere<sup>d</sup> my dancing in ‘In Old Madrid’ and they engaged me for the cabaret.”

One night came suddenly the question that had been framing itself in his mind for months:



## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

"Joan, will you marry me, and we'll never be lonely or miserable again."

She went into his arms with a glad cry that had something in it of the cry of a hounded man on reaching sanctuary, of a frightened child on coming to a maternal bosom. There was something very grateful in it, too.

This business of dancing, it may be observed, is no weakling's game. You may see the physique it requires in Adolph Boehm, the torso of a miniature Heracles and the legs of a wrestler. Even Pavlova and Kyasht, for all their seeming fragility, have constitutions of tempered steel.

No one who knows her can consider Joan Lebody a weakling. Not until the novelty and enthusiasm of her first engagement in musical comedy had worn off did she feel the strain of the work. Then she nearly collapsed altogether. It was with sheer dislike and utter weariness that she went on night after night to the strains of the haunting Spanish music, putting fire into her dancing when she felt only lassitude. One night she all but collapsed in the wings before she went on.

"Here," one of the chorus men pulled her aside. He broke a little white paper on the back of his hand. "Sniff that up. You got to have something." She sniffed it mechanically, without understanding, and she went on with her work. Her nerves

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

steadied down. Even the stage-manager in the wings applauded her dancing that night.

"How do you feel?" the pasty-faced chorus-man with the red nostrils asked her.

"Splendidly, thanks," she told him. "It helped me wonderfully. What was it, by the way?"

"Sure!" he told her. "Everybody needs a little bit of jazz now and then. I'll tell you, but you got to keep it to yourself. That was heroin."

If he had mentioned opium or cocaine she would have recoiled in fright, but the name of the drug sounded harmless, like aspirin.

"It doesn't do you any harm, does it? Where can one get it?"

"Do you harm? That's all bull!" he told her with the warmth of the proselytizer. "The cops won't let you get it. They don't want you to have your jazz in a drug-store."

"Is that so?" she asked innocently.

And so, not understanding, unthinking, Joan Lebadby commenced to fire up her emotions and conquer her fatigue like the veriest drug fiends of Seventh Avenue. Only after three months, with shrieking nerves, did she go to a physician. He looked at her twitching mouth, her pasty hue, her red nostrils.

"Heroin?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes. I've been taking a little heroin," she told him naively. "How did you know?"

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

He was very gentle with her, for he understood that she was no vicious person, but a pathetic girl whom one of the volunteer fishermen of vice had caught in a net. "Now the only thing for you to do," he ended, "is to take a long rest, under proper medical attention. I'm going to send you to a private hospital."

She went in there bowed shamefully. She came out of it feeling degraded—her spirit broken.

"Now we are all right again; cheerful, normal," her physician told her with professional optimism. "Now what are we going to do?"

"It's nearly summer," she said. "I'll have to take a job in a cabaret."

"You can't dance again," he told her sharply.

"But I've got to," she objected. "It's the only way I can earn my living."

"You must do something else, then. Under no circumstances must you dance again. Look here, little lady," he suggested. "Why don't you fall in love with some decent man, and marry him"—as though it were as easy as that—"and he'll take care of you. You can't dance again."

She shrugged her shoulders hopelessly and left his office.

And so they were married, and they refuged themselves in each other's arms, like two lost children in a dark forest. They left New York quietly

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

on board a steamship for the West Indies. They rippled down the Narrows. They passed the melancholy buoys of Ambrose Channel. New Jersey faded off to starboard like a dun.

"I'm so happy!" Joan's eyes were full of tears. "So happy!" And he too was happy, as he saw New York left behind.

For three months they drowsed quietly through the quaint, rococo Caribbean Islands. They were envied everywhere—she for her big, fair husband, and he for the dainty, exotic little woman whom he had made his wife.

And they were deliriously happy together. They grew fonder of each other every day. But there was something lacking in it that they never missed. The things he said to her, the pretty compliments, the multitude of caresses, the lavish presents he gave, might have happened between any chivalrous gallant man and any pretty woman. And her feelings for him were lacking in an essential something, too. There was too much gratitude in her.

"They were made for each other," people used to say, as they saw them pass. And so, indeed, they were, to all outward appearances. They thought they were in love with each other, but they were not.

This Anglo-Saxon love of ours lacks subtlety, perhaps, but it is magnificently frank, unfettered and free. Not for us the high tragedies of the Latins,

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

or the psychopathic experiences of the Slavs. It sweeps on like a great wind that noses out every cranny, or a great sea that leaves not a pebble on the shore untouched. It is immensely sane, immensely clean; and barriers hinder it. When we of the West love a woman, we want to know the minutest detail of her infancy, that we may live in imagination with her the time we have lost; we want to be cognizant of the slightest thoughts in her mind that we may know her to the uttermost. And the women are jealous of ancient memories, impatient of mental reticences. Barriers cannot be.

They had never told each other of those dark hours in their lives. In retrospect they seemed so terrible, so insane. "Some evening in the dark I will put my head on his breast and tell him," she promised herself. But perfumed dusks came and went, and she never had courage. "When we are older, and I have proven it is nothing to me now, I will tell her," he put it off.

By infinitesimal, unnoticeable degrees a barrier rose up between them like the work of the coral insect beneath the sea. They became reticent. They came back to New York. With the coming of summer they went down to Heaton Priory, the Milliken place on the Sound. At breakfast, at luncheon, everywhere, they began little by little to avoid each other's gaze. Each seemed to think that

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

the other had discovered his secret, and they lived in agony.

"What is it, Ned?" she would ask with a catch in her voice, as she caught his eyes on her.

"Nothing! Oh, nothing at all!" he would answer nervously.

"Why do you look at me like that, Joan?" he grew into the habit of saying.

"But I'm not looking at you, Ned," she would say truthfully. That he could never believe.

Heaton Priory is a pleasant place, a great, grey, ivy-covered house, overlooking the Sound. The fields are very green about it, and in the blue water before it little yachts pass by, trim, bird-like, white, like minute cloud-puffs against the sky. Behind it is an old-fashioned garden with rows of hives, and a multitude of humming bees are in the air. One gets the impression that the house has always been loved and carefully tended. Anyone would be happy there. Before his marriage it was the only place where Ned Milliken felt at home. And Joan should have loved it, too.

By dint of thinking so much of the past, of analyzing it, of brooding over it, their separate tragedies became like vast Titanic birds of prey, grey-winged, vulturish, casting a shadow over the sun, blotting out the flowers and the pleasant water and the little ships. The more they thought of it, the more they were hypnotized into hearing the beating of the foul



## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

wings; the more they were tempted to let all holds go, to follow out the path they believed Fate had beaten for them. It was Milliken who succumbed first.

He had gone into a downtown bar, after leaving the office of the estate, with Perry Whitcomb, the acquaintance who had served him as best man. Mechanically he had ordered a ginger ale.

"And how's the bride?" Whitcomb asked.

"Take away this muck and bring me a Scotch highball," Milliken ordered fiercely.

"Say, I thought you were off the hard stuff?" Whitcomb laughed.

And so it all began again with redoubled violence. And under the strain of that, combined with her own fear, Joan listened to the lurking demon that is in every one. There was one dumb, horror-stricken evening when each discovered the other, heard the other's story, now told recklessly, with terrible, heart-broken laughs.

There were attempts at reform, vain, hysterical attempts, with equally hysterical relapses. Progress and reflex, action and reaction, followed in a continuous nerve-tearing, agonizing vicious circle. They believed themselves to be doomed, and each high-strung individuality acting on the other whirled brain and will into a mad macabre dance. Let all holds go and be damned to it, they decided! For this was man born; that he should live in agony,

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

and die degraded! I see life for them at this time as a bare, snow-covered, uninhabited expanse, with gaunt black trees. A mist rises up from the sea, grey, miserable. Somewhere there is the cawing of crows and an owl hoots spectrally. And through this desolation they pass, two grey, shadowy wraiths coming God knows whence, going God knows whither, lonely, aimless, not even holding hands. . . .

With a little flurry of foam and a faint swishing of water at the bows the little sloop ran out of the harbour into the Sound. The mauve shadows of dawn were in the east, and there was a sound inshore of birds awakening. The dawn breeze came over the water like a spirit walking.

"How are you going to scuttle her?" Joan asked. She was sitting in the cockpit in her bathing dress of red and gold. Her face was white and her lips compressed. Occasionally her mouth moved as though she were saying a prayer.

"I'm going to turn her over," Milliken said very calmly. His eye was watching the pocket in the mainsail, his hands busy with sheet and tiller.

A reddish flush appeared on the sky-line and the water changed suddenly from blackish to a brilliant greenish blue. He measured the distance to the shore. A half-mile, he judged. No! they couldn't make it—not now, weakened as they were, flabby, untrained.

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

"All right, Joan," his voice went evenly. "Here goes!"

He ported the helm easily, still holding the sheet. The bow of the sloop dipped. Water gushed over the starboard gunwale. The girl shivered.

"Don't be afraid," he went on. "It can't be any worse on the other side than it is here."

"I'm not afraid," she answered bravely.

He had lashed the sheet securely. The crisp waves of the incoming tide broke into the cockpit more and more. He shifted forward, still holding beam on to the wind. She began to settle slowly. A wave broke over her from stem to stern. He cast loose the halliards!

"Overboard now!" he said.

She had slipped into the water and with a few strokes was away from the foundering boat. He kept alongside of her. They trod water silently. He wanted to say something, but he found nothing that fitted. In the east the first rays of the sun came up over the cloudbank like a battalion of slim gilded spears.

"Let's swim out," he told her. "We'll soon get tired, and it'll be over the quicker."

She was lying back in the water, her black hair loosed behind her. Her white face stared up like some strange sea flower.

"I want to tell you something," she said, "before we die. I love you, Ned!"

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

He did not look around at her. Doggedly he kept his eyes toward the faint Connecticut shore.

"I never thought I did, and I don't think I did at all, until perhaps last night. And now this morning, when we are out here, and everything else is nothing, but that we are going to die, I know I love you. All the time I had been thinking of nothing but myself, and now I think of you. And I love you very much, Ned, and I want you to pardon me for all that I did to you—and because I was no help to you, poor boy——" a little wave slapped her across the face.

He looked toward her queerly, a strange little grimace about his mouth.

"I love you, too, Joan," he said simply. "I mean it this morning. I'm in love with you!" and he laughed a little.

"O my God!" she moaned, "to hear that now!"

Floating on the water, with her head back, she was quietly crying, little sobs coming out of her heart. The dawn spread splendidly over the water and on the Long Island shore the trees along the cliffs showed shadowy, like the enchanted forest where the Sleeping Beauty is. Waves soughed and splashed gently. In the distance, two miles off, a schooner hove like a child's toy. A gull volplaned overhead on white, motionless wings.

"I never saw a morning before," she said. "I never knew what dawn was. They had been nothing

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

to me. And in a little while the sun will be up, and the fine day will break, and we, who are in love with each other—we'll be dead."

He kept silent. There was a lot he might have said, and his heart was full, but words were always scarce with him. And he did not dare to look toward her, lest he should break down.

"Listen, Ned," her voice had taken on a new inflexion, "listen, dear: There's still a chance for you. Go ahead and leave me. You'll be all right. It will never happen again! And you'll always love your Joan, and she'll always love you, wherever she is. . . ."

He shook his head.

"Poor, poor Ned," she said. "He couldn't make it, and he wouldn't leave me if he could. Don't, dearest heart, we mustn't cry."

She was crying herself, though—a queer, throaty little minor that blended with the whispering water as a theme might blend in a musical composition. She raised her head from the water.

"When the time comes, Ned," she asked him, "come here and kiss me." She broke into a little cry. "O Ned! The fine, fine day!"

With a quick slash of his legs he was beside her. He turned over on his back and caught her shoulders.

"Lie quiet," he told her. "There's still a chance."

"No, Ned! No!"

"Lie quiet," he commanded.

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

Easily and rhythmically he began the long journey ashore. They moved along, raising two furrowing ripples as he swam. One-two-three: he began counting mechanically to keep him from panic. His eyes looking overhead saw nothing but an immensity of blue space that seemed to him a figure of the thing he was trying to do. He himself would never get to shore, that he knew, but if he could only bring her where she could swim in—that was all he wanted. He could die happily then, he knew. The poor, poor kid, his heart nearly cried, she would be all right now. And if what the preachers said was true, that there was something behind the change called Death, a sentient unbodily life—then he could remain by her side, directing her, protecting her, caring for her in the true manner in which he cared for her only now. She tried to break away from his hands.

“Lie still,” his voice called to her sharply. “I can swim, too,” she said

“No,” he insisted. “Lie still.”

A numbness was creeping over the muscles of his legs and along his torso a stiffness was setting in. His breath, no matter how he tried to control it, came heavily, in panting bursts. He turned his head to glance at the shore. It was nearer than he thought, thank God! Some hundred yards. If he could only get her to the hundred-yard mark she could make it. And then he could die in peace



## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

gloriously, not as this morning, in a coward's way—but die trying to save the woman he loved.

"Ned, let me go!" she cried. "You're getting tired."

"Don't talk. I'm taking it easily," he panted.

One-two-three: he mustn't get excited, he told himself. Across his mind queer little visions were running—a glimpse of his mother, an incident at the Plaza—what a cursed fool; the meeting with Joan—"Won't you have supper with me? We're both so lonely! There, the pilot's been dropped, and I'm really off on my honeymoon. Darn New York!"

"Shut up!" he pulled himself together with a terrific effort. One-two-three! Make it another fifty! Good! Again: ten more! Again— He was drowsily conscious of water above him, not green, not blue, grey . . .

He felt dimly that he was being wrenched into existence, with a great straining at back and arms. Sand gritted against his back, and there was something dank under his head, like seaweed. He wanted to go to sleep again, but the straining continued and he opened his eyes. His wife was pulling his arms up and down. He looked at her wonderingly.

"It's all right," she was saying. "It's all right. We're not dead. We're alive, you and I!"

He struggled to sit up.

"How? How? How?" he babbled incoherently.

## THE MIRACLE OF BETHESDA

"I pulled you in," she told him. "I had to."

They lay exhausted for a while. They stumbled to their feet. He threw his arm about her, weakly, protectingly. She drew away from it with a queer significant smile, and took his hand instead.

Very slowly they made their way up the path toward the house, smiling strangely, utterly silent, their hearts too full for expression by words. A bee passed them, off on its happy business, humming like a Lilliputian aeroplane. A rabbit scuttled in a streak of white through the woods. A snipe ran before them, waddling grotesquely, like a hurried baby. At all these things they looked, with a sort of dumb wonder, as might have looked the blind folk whose caulked eyelids had opened, when at Jerusalem, near the sheepmarket, the angel troubled the waters of Bethesda Pool.

## IX

### A MANNER OF LEGACY

THE road from Senagosett to Anniston along the Cape Cod shore had ceased now to wind like a snake, and shot forward unexpectedly in a straight line. There came a dramatic turn at right angles. The hills and rather pleasant country where the remnant of the Indians lived dropped behind like a paid-out rope. A thirty-minute ride now and Anniston would appear, a summer colony with pleasant vulgar adjuncts—a dance-hall, a roller-skating rink, a motion-picture palace, shops where polite Japanese sold curios and a bazaar where an oily Armenian sold rugs.

Between the ~~r~~usticity of the old Indian colony and the humanity of Anniston came a melancholy stretch of road. Here a house was deserted and boarded up. Here was a forgotten burying-ground, very green and peaceful. A deserted golf club passed us—its fairway rolling like a sea, its tees lush with high grass, its hazards crumbling, its putting greens choked with weed—a dejected, pathetic place. Past that the shore with its mournful waters and the great

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

loneliness of the sea, with one schooner going eastward, a lonely vessel—one might imagine it somehow doomed. . . .

There were three girls in the car, and my brother Kevin who had just come out of China, and I. We had gone to Ketucket Head to see the Indians because it was the thing to do in Anniston, although it was a very garish place and there were no Indians there any more, but some poor half-breeds, grafted on Portuguese stock and common negro. It was hot coming back in the afternoon, and one of the girls spoke of tea.

“This looks all right.”

A sort of farmhouse had appeared at the turn of the road, a queer, ancient-looking building set far in trees. A stone gate was before it, and beside the stone gate a large spinning-wheel stood, with a placard above it. “At the Sign of the Spinning Wheel,” the inked letters read, “Chicken Dinner \$1.50. Afternoon Tea. Strawberries and Cream.”

We went towards the house, a forbidding stone house with a frowning doorway. A little beyond it in the garden a sort of arbour was placed, with a painted table in it, and chairs.

We sat down in the arbour and a waitress came in, a figure in white, with dark hair. I didn't notice her, because leaning back in the chair, reading across my shoulder at an acute angle, I was trying to make

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

out another placard attached above the door of the house.

"Tea for five—Orange Pekoe if you've got it—and some cake," one of the girls was ordering, "and bread and butter, Kiaran?"

"I do," I answered. "Listen: does anybody want to see an exhibition of Wool Carding and Spinning as Practised in New England Two Hundred Years Ago: Price One Dollar Each?"

"Nobody," came a laughing chorus.

I turned around and noticed Kevin watching the waitress, staring at her as she set tea-things on the table. I looked at her myself, and began staring as rudely as he. Like some Irish princess from a fireside story the sight and the prettiness of her were emphasized to us—the dim black hair, the eyes so darkly blue that they were like black smudges in the face, the dusky, oval face with the healthy colouring of the cheeks. One could imagine her in a hooded cloak of blue. Not a flaw in her from head to foot, her figure fine as a thoroughbred's, slim, *faux maigre*, with delicate wrists and ankles and a neck like the stem of a flower. She went out of the arbour.

"She's a looker." Hallie Hoskins, the dark-haired little diving-girl, nodded appreciatively.

"She surely is!"

"She's a lady, too."

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

"I think so." A queer thing to see on that deserted strip of Cape Cod, an Irishwoman of the gentler folk, serving as a waitress in a tea-room. Some romantic girl from an impoverished family, we thought, who had come over here to teach or the like, and been stranded, and swallowed her pride. As she came in again the impression grew stronger. And as we looked at her furtively we noticed a strange expression on her face, a strange something in her eyes.

"What's she afraid of?" one of the girls asked. "What's she suspicious of? What's she trying to hide?"

We were talking about her and eating when there was a rustle of silk behind us. A strange, tinny voice asked:

"Is everything all right?"

A woman, evidently the proprietress of the place, was looking at us. We had first a grotesque impression of her, as though there was something wrong. It was only after a minute's puzzling that we noticed she was a dwarf, about forty, with a wrinkled, searching face. Her old-fashioned dress of lilac silk was gathered in innumerable tucks and flounces. About the wrinkled neck was an old-fashioned bead ornament and her feet were small and in buckled shoes. Her hands were small, too, and crisped, like a bird's claws. Her metallic voice struck you as simpering, insincere.



## A MANNER OF LEGACY

"After tea, perhaps, you would like to see an exhibition of wool-carding and spinning in the old New England style?"

"I'm sorry," I said for the party. "We're rather hurried."

"It won't take long," her voice insinuated.

"I'm afraid not."

"Only a dollar a head," she pleaded.

"Some other afternoon."

It seemed only a minute after that that same metallic voice was behind me, as though speaking through a defective telephone, insidious, pleading.

"Perhaps after tea you will come in and see an exhibition——"

"We are very hurried!"

"Only a dollar a head!"

"I'm afraid not."

"Perhaps some other time——" There was a pathetic disappointment in the tones.

"I wish that fool woman would keep away," I was muttering. Little Gale Hunter was smiling.

"What is it?"

"There are two of them—twins," she laughed. "I've been here before."

"Let's get out of this," someone suggested. "The place is wrong; the people wrong."

We rose to go and once more the waitress appeared, dignified as a queen, her dim black eyes strangely

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

dramatic, in that sleepy, melancholy atmosphere. There was no doubt about it, she was beautiful, with the beauty of Irish legendry—of Niamh, who enticed Ossian to the Country of the Young; of Maeve, Queen of Connaught, who ravaged Louth for the Brown Bull of Cooley; of Grania, who for love of Diarmuid left the palace of Finn, the King.

"Yes, she is Irish, on her mother's side," I could hear a simpering, tinny voice explain. "The daughter of our brother—a manner of legacy. . . ."

As we went out through the gate we could not forbear a glance backward, at the strange, wrong atmosphere, at the two dwarfs with the ancient dresses and the tall Irish lass beside them, like two hoary gnomes with a captured human princess.

"Cinderella," my brother Kevin whispered to me.

I nodded, but the pretty fairy story did not seem to fit the situation. There came to my mind a sinister setting of unspeakable infernal rites, of secret Sabbaths on windy mountain-sides; of women necromancers consulting the Gilded Head; of infra-human cruelties; of abominations in the nostrils of the Lord. . . .

I want you to get the figure of my brother, Kevin Campbell MacDonald, if you can, straight in your mind. A tall man, as tall as I am, but broader, and young still, not yet thirty. The secret Stuart blood of the family seems to have focused in him, in this generation, and accounts for the regular features, the

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

dreamy, melancholy eyes, the waving brown hair. The blood accounts for his life, to some extent—accounts for his romantic quests in life. At fifteen he ran away from Portora to go to sea, hoping to find in a whaling vessel the mythical island of Auroras, off Tierra del Fuego. The consul in Nagasaki rescued him from that mess and sent him home to finish school and college. At twenty-two, when he was assured of a political secretaryship to a Cabinet minister, he somehow persuaded Sven Hedin to take him to Central Asia, because he was intrigued by the names Samarkand and Bokhara, and knew of the Gobi as the Desert of Gold, and had read the travels of Messer Marco Polo. It was on his return that he was elected to follow our kinsman, Sir Robert Hart of Belfast into the Chinese Customs Service.

“The Celestial Kingdom!” he dreamed. “The Great Wall of Peking! The land of the Dragon!”

And that satisfied him for five years. He went up and down the Yellow Empire, on his lawful occasions, fulfilling his duties, collecting the revenues from salt and opium and what not, in a detached, subconscious way, and all the time revelling in the atmosphere that produced great poets and administrators: Li Po, the Drinker of Wine, who died embracing a moonbeam on a lake; Tu Fu, the God of Verse, whose poetry was efficacious in malaria; Chung Tzu, the Very Wise One, and Po-Chū-i, the Tender Singer. About him, everywhere, was romance—a land of

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

plum-trees and wistaria blossoms; of Dragon Boat Festivals; of palaces built in pagodas; of brocade and vases; of wistful women with microscopic feet, and wise and very dignified mandarins with buttons of coral in their hats, and buttons of jade and the plaintive music of lutes.

"He will never come back," people said.

But he had come back, on a three-months' holiday, to visit the bleak Ulster country of his birth; as dreamy as ever, and dignified and silent. He had come by way of America, stopping over at Cape Cod, to visit his elder brother.

"If he comes back, he will come back with a Manchu princess for his bride, a woman with slant, jade eyes and lily feet," had been prophesied.

But he had come back alone, unmarried, untouched in the heart as yet. He was not going back to Ulster for a bride either, he admitted laughingly, and what he said was true. For all his romance, there was no woman as yet who had measured up to his standard of chivalry, though there was many a one had found heartache in thinking of him. No, he was still unmarried, and when he turned up alone I remembered a comment of my mother's.

"Kevin," she had laughed—we had been discussing Patrick's bouncing wife—"Kevin will never marry, unless he finds the wood of the Sleeping Beauty, and hews his way into it. A Beauty in Distress is the only one who will capture him. He

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

wants his fairy princess, as a schoolgirl wants her fairy prince." The kindly smile on her face changed to a look of apprehension. "Poor laddie!" she unaccountably finished.

It must have been fifteen years ago, when Dottie Dimple Davenport was in her vogue, that vaudeville goers could see the Treddick Sisters—Myra and Zoë—in their offering on the music-hall stage. In those days, while there still remained a taste for morbid museums and for waxworks, dwarfs on the stage were not rare. A simple enough little act was theirs, a few of the popular songs of the day, and a step dance. The costume they wore was a white dress, with a blue sash, showing their rounded legs to the knee—a child's dress for a party. Their position on a bill was not glorious; they opened the show or closed it, and doubtless they earned their little money, for they appealed to children and to the staid members of an audience, and to the generally unsophisticated, as acrobats do.

"They're cute—and refined," managers agreed, and let them sing *Dolly Grey* and *A Bicycle Built for Two*, in their shrill, tinny voices, and give their harmless little cakewalk.

For years they had trotted to and from theatres and boarding-houses—two grotesque little figures, such as a child might imagine in a nursery story; prim little bodies, with a great modesty, queerly out of it in the meretricious bustle of a vaudeville theatre.

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

The great ones of their calling never noticed them and the minor lights, like themselves, were repulsed in their kind advances. The twain were very timid.

They might have been deemed harmless on the vaudeville stage, but in Anniston their whole family had been viewed askance. Their father, Elnathan Treddick, farming what had been the Treddick homestead for two hundred years, dour, silent, just with the harsh justice of the Old Testament, him Anniston left severely alone. Colourlessly he tilled his soil; he married a colourless woman; he lived colourlessly, and with no glint of colour did he die. There was line to him, harsh, strong, but no humanity. There was no mourning in Anniston when he died.

For the twin dwarfs Anniston had little taste, keeping aloof, as most human beings will from any edifice which the Great Mason has seen fit to warp. In that family Anniston kept all its feelings for one person; and its feelings were hatred, and the person was Bartimeus Treddick, son of Elnathan.

I should like you, for my own good reasons, to get also this figure of Bart Treddick into your heads. A tall, lumbering sort of a man, six feet and a half high. His features were dramatic, rugged, of the type associated with the Red Indian. His eyes were small and glitteringly black. He had a knack of dilating and contracting them that made me think



## A MANNER OF LEGACY

of a snake. He was silent. His mouth had a queer twitching habit, and his hands were crooked, like a bird's claws. He loved money, as an addict loves liquor—the sight, the smell, the taste of it—and as a few men love womankind, covetously, passionately, very evilly.

“Bart Treddick would go from here to hell for a silver dollar,” old Captain Charles tells me. The subject of Bart Treddick rouses him from his customary mildness of speech to the use of euphemisms for blasphemy. “My Godfrey! He would cut a man's throat for a gold-piece—and he did! Saint Christmas! That man was a hellion where money was concerned.”

He had been apprenticed to the sea, but there was that terrible streak in him, and he left it at once to follow after his idol up and down the world. He was in Panamá, reaping the remnants of the De Lesseps gold in a gaming-house. He was in Colombia, engineering some unsavoury affair connected with the smuggling of emeralds. The Australian mining fields knew him. Every spot on earth where money was to be found, by foul means preferably—for foul means are quicker than fair—there had Bart Treddick been. Not only did he get his money abroad, but he got it at home, too. He leased the farm, for a term of years, and he made his sisters exhibit their deformity for money on the public stage, so as to keep themselves alive. Whenever he

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

turned up, which was infrequent, he got their savings away from them by various devices.

"I think I'd better take care of this for you," he would say, when he found out what they had, and his eyes would contract and dilate, and his mouth would twitch as though he had lost control of himself, and his fingers crook like a predatory bird's. They had not the courage to conceal the money or to refuse it.

And then Bart Treddick died. He was coming from Samoa with the gains of some improper venture around his body in gold in a money-belt, a weighty quantity of pieces, when the freighter *Ceres* went down, and all aboard but he were saved. The weight of the gold shackle made him sink like a stone. The loss of the *Ceres* was never explained—the act of God, the underwriters gave out as reason. From this Captain Charles draws an interesting corollary:

"Everyone knows there's people as is Jonahs," he asserts in his sea wisdom. "The act of God, you see, and Bart Treddick aboard of her! You follow——" It may so be.

Following the surprise of his death, there came the news of his marriage to an Irish woman on the Clyde seventeen years before, a young widow with property in the shape of a small store. He had a daughter by her, Charity Treddick, sixteen years old. A month after the news of his death, his wife followed him.

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

"She died of joy. That's what happened to her," Captain Charles explains curtly.

Very shortly after, there came back to the lonely farmstead beyond Anniston the Misses Myra and Zoë Treddick, unchanged by the years of their absence but for a wizening of their features, and bringing with them the prettiest young girl ever seen by Anniston.

"You could have knocked me down with a feather," Captain Charles says, "and when I heard it was Bart Treddick's daughter, by Godfrey! It only goes to show——" But what it went to show, I have forgotten.

Silently they came, and very silently they lived there for two years. Only occasional glimpses were caught of them—two gnomes, such as Maxfield Parrish might draw; two strange old witches, intimates of Satan, so they might have appeared to an imaginative yokel. And through the trees there were glimpses of a tall young goddess, straight as a sapling, with dim black hair, and dim black eyes with something in them she was trying to hide. Of their life there was only one thing known: they had grown indescribably close as to money. "Meaner'n hell," spoke Anniston succinctly.

"It ain't no life for a young girl up there with those two mean old devils," went current opinion. "Someone ought to step right in and take her away from them."

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

But no one did, and two years went by, and by the grace of God and a holiday public Anniston waxed rich and a trifle vulgar. Among the staid roads where once Puritans walked, with their buckled shoes and their high, grotesque hats, there scudded speeding two-seaters, clubby, snapping cars. Over the waters, where the square-rigged whalers went out in state from New Bedford to the Polar Seas, where the clipper ships raced under a cloud of sail from Boston to the Horn, there chugged a population of power-boats, unsightly and annoying as mosquitoes. And from Anniston, where the summer colony was, along a melancholy road to Senagosett Head, there ran a continued pilgrimage towards the Indian colony and the garish cliffs.

And suddenly one day along the road, in response to an iterated want, there appeared before the Treddick farm the announcement that chicken dinners could be procured there, and tea and strawberries and cream, and that for a price there could be witnessed an exhibition of wool-carding and spinning.

"And they've got their niece Charity there as waitress, tending table," the residents snorted. "They work her for everything they can get. The miser's blood! They look on her, as they themselves say, as a manner of legacy."

For a week I had little time for Kevin, between this thing and that thing, and I let him roam about

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

alone. I had an impression he was playing golf a lot, and going out with a fast sloop, and comparing dives with the little Hoskins girl. It was on a Friday evening that I found I was mistaken.

"Do you think you could come down to that hotel place for dinner on Monday night?"

"Why go there?"

"I want to bring Miss Treddick, the girl from that tea-house, down there for dinner. . . . I've been spending a lot of time up there this week," he said simply. And I knew there was something serious afoot.

"Surely. I can come."

"She is very beautiful and a very sweet girl, and when I think of her at the mercy of those hags——"

There had been five brothers of us: Patrick and Colin; Firdarragh; Kiaran (myself) and Kevin, the youngest. And of all of them I had felt closest to Kevin. I could feel his emotions as keenly as my own, and very well I could imagine him riding out there with the vision of that haunting face and noble presence drawing as the sun draws the eagle's eye. I could imagine a song on his lips and a song in her heart as he rode to her, and could see how the melancholy landscape became a mysterious setting in his eyes for romance. The winding road like a ribbon, and the sighing of the wind in trees, and the queer, dark sea-marshes and the bending grass,

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

and the rhythmic throb, like a great heartbeat, of the sea. I could see him stride up there, his business no man's business but his. I could imagine him talking with his terrible courtesy, to the withered gnomes. Big-limbed and tall, with his regular features and his haunting eyes and wavy hair, armour would have become him better than tweed, and I can imagine him, a Champion of Christendom, standing in that dark room talking to the mysterious, malignant women, with the enthralled lady by his side, awaiting delivery from witchcraft. . . .

She had never before had any man whose eyes lighted in her presence. Her life in Scotland had been entirely a session of school, cloistered, aloof. Her two years in America had not thrown her in the company of any lovers, and now at his coming her spirit opened with a shy modesty as a flower will open in the light of dawn. She blushed at his coming; was prettily awkward; gave strange, shy smiles; made abrupt disappearances, and reappeared slowly, as though compelled. She was very happy that he was there, and one felt that he filled her thoughts night and day. He, for the first time in his life, knew what it was to be in love, as the phrase goes. About the pair of them scintillated an atmosphere, a gentle electric tingling; an ebb and flow of waves, as of earth trying to receive the ocean, and the ocean trying to cover the shore; a groping hand in a great darkness; an inexplicable necessity. . . .



## A MANNER OF LEGACY

All day long he thought of her—disconnected flashes of her would pass through his brain, the flutter of her grey dress among the trees, the shadow of her dark eyes, the soft line of her neck, a glimpse of ear. And visions would come to him of her in his company in the places he knew and loved, on the Ulster crags where the eagles barked, and the savage waves battered the cliffs like ordnance, or over in the gentler saffron East, in the land of pagodas and colourful blossoms, of great rivers and broad alluvial plains; a land of colour and of many lutes, the land of King-fou-tze, the Reverent One, and Laotzu, the Wise, and Tawak, the Supreme Architect.

I met her in the village in Kevin's company, and I liked her more than ever. She was very beautiful, as beautiful as Mary Lovat, our grandmother, who had turned a king's head. And her voice was low and soft and very rich. She had great dignity.

"My brother tells me you are coming to dinner with us, if your aunts permit."

"There will be no trouble about that," she smiled. And I wondered.

We wanted to buy her some trinket in the house of the Armenian.

"Indeed, no!" she said. "And what is more, I am going to take your money from you for my pet charity. That will teach you not to be careless."

And she pouched it with a queer gleam in her eye.



## A MANNER OF LEGACY

At dinner she spoke to me of Kevin's work, of his position in China, of his salary.

"I should think," she said simply, "that there would be a chance for him to make a lot of money there, something in the importing line, for instance. His knowledge of the language should be valuable—"

I might have explained to her that the family never laboured for personal gain but worked in the ideal of public service—soldiers and sailors, authors, legislators, diplomats; but I left that for Kevin to tell her. I could understand, I thought, why she felt that way. Cooped up with the hags of aunts, her thoughts must always run in the direction of money. She had none for herself, and she would like some, or the sense of freedom in it. A little while and she would grow out of that, the poor, pathetic, little lassie.

"Kiaran," said my brother to me next afternoon, "I am going to-night to ask her to marry me."

I knew that was coming, but at the words I felt with a shock the wrong feeling, the wrong atmosphere. I could not think happily of my brother going out in quest of a bride. I thought only of a forbidding house with two gnomes and a fairy princess in it, within a lonely sea.

"If you can get her away from the aunts," I fumbled for something to say. "They look on her, in their own words, as a manner of legacy."

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## A MANNER OF LEGACY

He had walked all the way from Anniston to the Treddick household, because there was a tingling in him he wanted to conquer, and a strange strength had arisen in his spirit and body, a seething energy he wanted to exhaust. The road rose gently uphill and skirted a pine-clad lake, where there was the rough harmony of a frog chorus, and queer, eerie sounds among the trees. High in the air hung a moon like a sickle, and along the hedges as he passed was the faint stirring of life, the chatter of insects, the movement of uncertain birds.

He turned towards the seashore, breaking across a meadow, and walked by the strand; and in his ears the faint sougling of the waves, the chink of them on the moving pebbles, seemed to form an accompaniment of a full, unspoken melody in his heart. Friendly dusk came about him and seemed peopled with sympathetic shadows, wishing him kindness in his quest.

"Charity!" he said gently to himself. "Charity!"

A feeling of nervousness came over him, that she would not have him for a husband. But that passed as he went up towards the house from the shore through a little orchard, and the only thing was a feeling of reverential love. How gentle she was, he thought. Her soft hands! Her little fluttering body, like a dove's! And she in the hands of those harpies the little gentle one! The frightened roe! In a little while, in a day or so, she would be away from them

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

and the memory of that would be forgotten. And her gentleness and sweetness would expand and exhale fragrance like a flower beneath the sun, the soft-handed, the low-voiced little one.

As he came towards the house, through the trees, a low sound of moaning came towards him, a series of whimpers, and a shrill voice he did not recognize. A sense of disaster swept upon him, turned his face white.

"If they dared——" he groaned out, and ran forward.

A lighted window was before him and he looked through it, and he stiffened suddenly like a pointing dog, or a person stricken to death.

"Will you do it again? Will you do it again?" he heard shrilled, and there was the crack of a whip, and whimpers.

Across the room one dwarf was cowering with chattering teeth, while the other was cringing in the middle of the floor. Above her Charity was towering, whip in hand, her face a black blotch of maniacal anger.

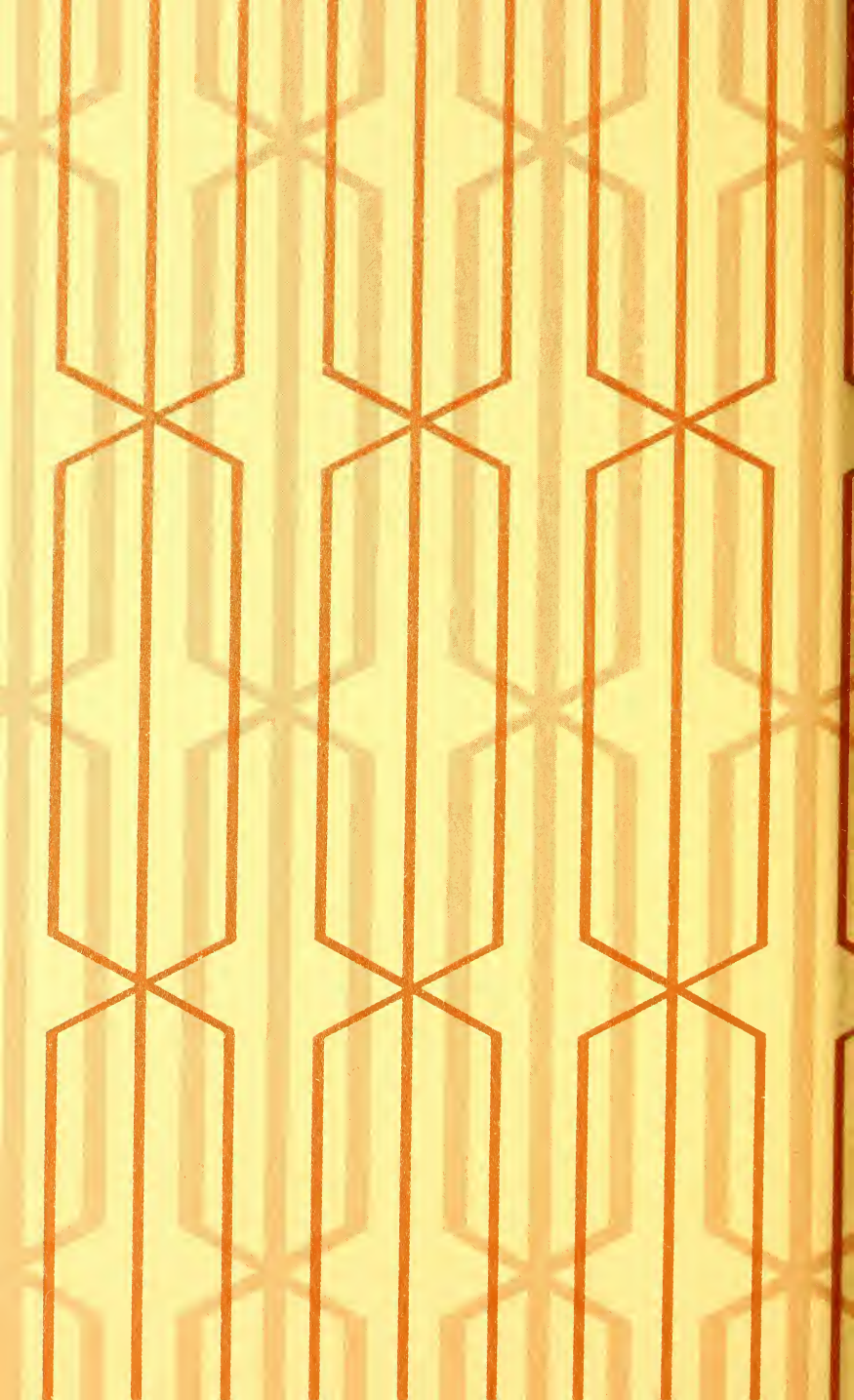
"There were five of them," the girl was shrilling, "and you could have persuaded them to come in and see the exhibition. You let five dollars go. Do you hear me? Five dollars! Will you do it again?" And she brought the whip down savagely across the poor thing's shoulder.

He turned away from the window, and with a cry

## A MANNER OF LEGACY

of an affrighted dog, and his face blanched to the colour of lime, he stumbled running down to the seashore. He went knee-high in the water in his panic, and turning, panting, lurched down the strand. Through every pore of him there blew a very cold wind, and it seemed to him, as he ran, that all about him were ghosts laughing.







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